Tangier Island

Place, People, and Talk

David L. Shores

Newark: University of Delaware Press
London: Associated University Presses

Associated University Presses
440 Forsgate Drive
Cranbury, NJ 08512

Associated University Presses
16 Barter Street
London WC1A 2AH, England

Associated University Presses
P.O. Box 338, Port Credit
Mississauga, Ontario
Canada L5G 4L8

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Shores, David L.
Tangier Island : place, people, and talk / David L. Shores.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-87413-717-9 (alk. paper)
1. Tangier Island (Va.)—History. 2. Tangier Island (Va.)—Social life and customs. 3. English language—Dialects—Virginia—Tangier Island. I. Title.
F232.T15 S56 2000
975.5'16—dc21 00-021430

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This book is for
Edith, my Mom, who never kept us home from school and
Elmer, my dad, who seldom had enough but always paid his way;
For Christina, Elizabeth, and
Berkeley, my granddaughters, and Bryson Lane, my grandson;
And for
Katie and Bob, for being family—
And all the people of
Tangier Island, Virginia—those gone and those still here.

Contents

Acknowledgments

ONE OF THE PLEASANTER MOMENTS OF WRITING A BOOK IS THE TIME when you can sit down to acknowledge the debts owed. Undoubtedly, the greatest one that I owe is to Kim Shores, my daughter-in-law, whose wizardry with the word processor astonishes me and whose accuracy in deciphering my left-handed handwritten drafts that even I have a hard time reading awes me even more. I wish to acknowledge Karl Knight and Phil Raisor, who read the entire manuscript, relished causing me pain, but made it easier for the readers. Karl Knight did me an additional courtesy in making some preliminary drawings and suggesting structural changes. I wish also to thank Debbie Miller for making the maps and drawings look professional and Donna Crockett, Olen S. Evans, and Linda Nerine for photographs that enhanced the quality of the book. Special mention should be made of Carole Hines, who contributed to earlier formulations of some of the linguistic material.

Among many things I am grateful for, wholly unforeseen by me, is my having become a friend and colleague of Raven McDavid's and the beneficiary, like so many others, of his knowledge, largesse, and courtly and scholarly demeanor. I must acknowledge the enormous help from three earlier works, the books by Samuel Warren Hall, Ann Hughes Jander, and William Warner, who made me privy to notions, impressions, and details about Tangier and the Bay that I would not have otherwise known and that proved valuable in writing this book. I wish to thank the staffs of the Accomack County Courthouse and the Accomack Public Library for helping me with court records and census tables. I need also to thank Caroline Mabry of the Archives and Special Collection of Randolph-Macon College for introducing me to the church histories of Arthur Stevenson and Kirk Mariner. And then, there is Garnett, who not only put up with me during the writing but also through her readings detected a lot of not so well-wrought prose.

I scarcely know how to recognize properly all the readings that I have used. I am sure that I have appropriated thoughts, expressions, and turns of phrase that during the process lodged in my

mind and ultimately found their way into the manuscript. If this is so, their originators know who they are, and I hope I have represented them accurately and made them a little proud that they are a part of this undertaking. Moreover, in the matters of history and sociology, I ventured as far as I comfortably could. The reasons are that I just did not know enough.

Many thanks to Donald Mell of the University of Delaware Press and to Christine Retz, Peggy Roeske, Ellen Kazar, and Julien Yoseloff of the Associated University Presses for their professionalism.

Finally, I must thank Katie and Bob—for being Katie and Bob. And, for some reason, unfathomable to me, I have been the most fortunate of men in the two wives I have had, Betty, who died in 1988, and Garnett, whom I married in 1991.

To the Reader

A WRITER OF A BOOK ABOUT TANGIER ISLAND IS FACED WITH CERTAIN difficulties, particularly so when he has three stories to tell, that of place, that of people, and that of talk. A concern with these poses other problems: meager historical reference and evidence; the privacy, sensitivity, and reticence of the Islanders to talk about themselves; and the uneasy feeling they have about the way they talk. Talk here has the prior claim. Though it does have the chiefest claim, place and people demand an appreciable notice, even crucial, for location and the social and working lives of the people are vital in constructing a story of the Islanders and their talk, which is special. In providing historical and social background, I do not proclaim myself either a historian or a sociologist. My aim is to provide a fairly comprehensive and practical look at Tangier historical and social relationships so that the reader can gain a better understanding of and greater appreciation for Tangier talk, how it got started and what it has become. Almost everyone seems to know that the way people talk is not by accident but is chained to and formed by the place where they were born and lived; for as soon as people overhear other people talking with an unfamiliar accent, they are likely to wonder, or even ask, about the origins of those other people.

This book has both personal and professional roots and inspiration. I was born into a waterman family on Tangier Island during the year of the August Storm, 1933, which, together with the Depression, forced my family and several others to Urbanna, Virginia, not far away, on the Rappahannock River, where I grew up. For years, all these families made annual trips to Tangier, and now I still do, for most of their relatives were there and mine still are. This explains my personal inspiration. My professional one is that I am a retired teacher whose teaching and research were in English medieval literature and language and American English dialects, fields that served to quicken my interest in the speech of Tangier, pronounced "Tanger" by the Islanders, and my desire to write this book.

Tangier Island has existed as a community for at least two hundred years, maybe more. What seems to be clear is that it started out as a "fenceless" range for livestock during the seventeenth century and continued to be such until 1778 when a Joseph Crockett, not a John Crockett, but a Joseph Crockett, bought some acreage and set up a household, later to be joined by a few others that numbered around seventy-nine by 1800. Though Accomack County, of which Tangier is a part, on Virginia's Eastern Shore holds the country's earliest records, historical reference to Tangier is hard to come by; and what there is, one finds hazy. As everyone knows, however, in Virginia it was the "men of quality," not the "others" or the "lesser sort," who got the attention. Tangier burst into a sort of prominence shortly after the turn of the century when it became the site of a religious camp meeting featuring Joshua Thomas, the "Parson of the Isles," many eminent preachers of the regular clergy, and hordes of worshipers from all over, most of whom were interested in the spirit of the Lord, whereas others were interested in the spirit of what could be appropriately called "sideshows." While the Tangier Camp Meetings were becoming quite famous, the War of 1812 broke out; and two years later Tangier was occupied by the British under the command of Admiral Sir George Cockburn, who made it his center of operations for raids on the shores of the Chesapeake, particularly Washington and Baltimore. Apart from these events, information has been scarce, with a rare glimpse occasionally from the Accomack records. For a long time it was merely known as a small community in the Chesapeake Bay that kept itself going by farming and some fishing and oystering.

Today Tangier stands as an island community of fewer than seven hundred people mid-bay of the Chesapeake just below the Maryland-Virginia line. The Island, never great in size and number, is a victim of shoreline erosion and a dwindling population. Except for a garden or two, nothing remains from its former years as a farming community. Now a community of watermen, Tangier Islanders depend on what they can catch from the Bay or "following the water." Most small towns have been for a long time where people just live and depend on other places or cities for work and recreation. Tangier Island is a place where the residents live and work and carry out all the purposes of their lives. It is a tight, almost invariable, town where all the great events of human life—birth, marriage, and death—are confronted with as much joy and sadness as in any other place, but unlike other places, these events seem to touch everyone more deeply. With all that goes on, things have sharper outlines and contrasts on Tangier in sadness and joy, good

and bad fortune, sickness and wellness, light and darkness, old and young, male and female, quiet and noise, and Christian and sinner, but not in those who have some wealth and those who do not, which is to say, that social lines, if drawn, are not done so very sharply. In many isolated communities where living and working are inseparable, often the people are destined for hard work and poverty. Tangier Islanders have known both and may occasionally suffer degrees of want, but they always have shelter and never go to bed hungry. Seldom accustomed to abundance, they have never associated the quality of life with a standard of living. Should the Bay be closed, however, the impact on Tangier families will be swift and significant.

The common denominator, it is well known, in all societies has been the family, which has been under great stress in modern life and sometimes fractured. No element in the Tangier community is more pervasive and obvious than the family, where not only mothers and fathers and siblings are found within shouting distance but also both sets of grandparents, even great-grandparents, in-laws, cousins, and uncles and aunts. They generally see or talk with one or the other daily, and a mother at lunch may have a child, a cousin, a nephew or niece, an uncle or aunt, an event that takes place simultaneously in different households without prior planning. At a recent funeral of an aunt who died at age seventy-five, I noticed that the list of survivors included three daughters and two sons, two brothers and one sister, sixteen grandchildren, nineteen great-grandchildren, two great-great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews, almost all of whom now live on Tangier. Sometimes kinship becomes obscured, as one must suspect, where most of the population shares only a few surnames, a total of around thirty. This is to say, some Islanders will marry cousins, but usually where the blood relationship runs no closer than that of second cousins. Children are valued, well-treated, and loved—and also disciplined. Historically, they have had short childhoods, especially the boys, for many around the age of fourteen are well-equipped to perform many of the chores of a waterman. Some social relationships would puzzle outsiders. As a rule, the people are tentative and awkward in confronting strangers, diffident about asking questions, and somewhat hesitant about the act of introducing friends or acquaintances. Also, seldom will one hear "please," "excuse me," and "thank you," generally common courtesies—it is not that they are rude but that such responses and introducing people seem to be taken by them as "putting on airs." They, moreover, shy away from public displays of affection. Much to their credit,

though, is that they scorn puffery, bragging, advertising, campaigning, and even voting for oneself. So, then, as a group, they are neither rich nor envious, but a close and thriving entity with the appearance of a happy and satisfied people.

Language, the most resistant of all social patterns, takes on a special form and color on Tangier Island. The specialness does not come from its being considered by the Islanders to have a deeply-felt symbolic significance in their lives. In fact, I am forced to deny that there is even a modicum of pride, soul, or identity in their perception of the way they talk. More than anything else, unfortunately, they feel somewhat ashamed of their speech. It, rather, comes from the combination of linguistic features, such as words and expressions and the phonetic diversity of vowels, which in combination with other features make it a special variety of American English and one in the history of the English language.

For the last fifty years or so, unlike in the previous 150 years, this small speck of land seems to be known by just about everyone. Since the fifties, the *Virginian-Pilot*, a Norfolk newspaper, has run well over two hundred stories. Others have occurred in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Baltimore Sun*, not to mention articles in numerous magazines, such as the *National Geographic*, *Newsweek*, and *Southern Living*. The Island was featured on national network television, the subject of a story on BBC, and the source for a Bell Atlantic commercial that had a relatively long run. Every summer thousands of tourists visit the Island. Most of the Islanders are amused by all this and wonder still what all the fuss is about. They do not seem to mind as long as the rush does not invade their privacy and cut into their status as "the softcrab capital of the world." We all know that oddity has a tremendous draw on journalists, an observation easily verified by the many stories about Tangier, no matter the main thrust of these stories through the years—whether it is the building of the seawall, digging the channels, the dedication of the airport, the need for a doctor, or skirmishes over crabbing boundaries—they all never fail to mention, never quite accurately, Cornish ancestry and settlement, the marshy ridges of the low-lying island, the graves in the small front yards, the "quaintness" of the people, and the "amusing and eccentric" and "bastardized" speech they label "pure Elizabethan English," all of which require further inspection and correction.

In this book, I will attempt to draw a historical setting of Tangier's forebears and the formative elements of the Island, a portrait of the Tangier people as a community, and a descriptive profile of Tangier

speech. The first chapter focuses on the colonial emigration of those who came to the Chesapeake Bay region with regard to who they were, where in England they came from, and why they came, primarily to come up with a representation of those who found their way to the lower Bay and to Tangier Island, Virginia, as a permanent home. A capsule response for now is that those who came to Tangier were a part of the larger group of emigrants called the "others" or "lesser sort," who came from all over and for a better life. The chapter also provides an explanation of the geographical relationships of the Bay and the Tidewater Virginia region.

The second chapter considers Tangier settlement and covers the social history of Tangier from 1778 up to the first half of the nineteenth century when the community took on the character it essentially has today. Also, some consideration is given to the "facts" of Cornish ancestry; the 1686 settlement date; the roles of Tangier in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War; as well as the Islanders' "coziness" with pirates, picaroons, and privateers. Important here also is the discussion of the transition of the Island in its movement from a range for livestock to essentially a small farming community, and to, after its own "migration," what it is today, a community of watermen.

Chapter three begins the second part of the book with a look at the people of Tangier. It considers life and the family and the roles of women, men, and children as they go about their daily lives. Noted here also is the specialness of the community itself as family.

Chapters four and five cover two of the three most conspicuous aspects of Tangier Islanders as community, work and religion, and show how the two have meshed recently to create what could make Tangier a unique watermen's village. The work chapter covers both the good and darker sides of the fisheries of the Bay. The fisheries of the Bay did not become big business until around 1800, give or take a decade or two, when New England dredge boats, after depleting the Northern oyster grounds, sought the rich oyster rocks of the Bay. This event brought money to many, and "big money" to a few. It was perhaps not entirely bad in itself, but it not only ravished the Chesapeake oyster beds but also, in the words of one careful observer "violated the laws of God and man." Somewhat later, fishing also became a productive industry and prospered for a long time. The latest industry to develop was crabbing, which was only a casual business until the invention of the crab pot. The Islanders are noted for their skill in all three pursuits and have followed them for years as the seasons change. The chapter looks at these occupational endeavors not only as watermen making a living but at them

as they have become serious economic concerns. Indeed, The Bay and these fisheries are under siege and have created "hard feelings" and mistrust among watermen, environmentalists, and federal and state agencies, with all three deserving the finger-pointing that takes place.

The other chapter examines the religious life of the Tangier community and introduces an initiative that could drastically change waterman behavior and revolutionize the relationships of watermen and the regulating agencies. I am referring to the Stewardship 2020 Initiative, a covenant made March 12, 1998, committing the watermen to be ecological and environmental stewards as well as church stewards. In their religious life, the Bible has enormous authority in the questions of belief, faith, and worship. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, the flight from bondage in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, David's victory over Goliath, Joshua's conquest of the promised land, the prophecies of Jeremiah, Amos, and Micah, the Islanders know and believe. They do not question the existence of Moses and the others, whether Jesus fed the five thousand, and the authorship of the Bible. Nor do they particularly care about what biblical scholars say; the Gospels, they say are good enough for them as they were for their ancestors, the most notable of whom was Joshua Thomas. A darker side of their religious lives followed the breach in their church, Swain Memorial Methodist Church, which led to the creation of a second one, the New Testament Church, an event that generated behavior that the Islanders are not particularly proud of. In recent years, attempts at reconciliation have been made and appear to have some effect, though strong feelings persist.

Chapter six gives an account of order and town government, play, school, and health in order. Smallness dictates the nature of all these activities and requires special efforts. What one finds on the mainland will not usually be found on Tangier, but what the Islanders do have apparently works, for they appear to be sufficient. They seem to have order, to have fun, to be prepared for college, and to be well-cared for except for some recurring illnesses that apparently are tied to Founder's effect, diet, and cooking practices.

Chapter seven, which introduces Part III, Talk, briefly examines the matter of continuity and change in American English and its divergence from British English, broadly characterizes the Tangier dialect, and places it historically. The chapter's main concern is to show how the Tangier dialect stands apart from the coastal mainland dialects of Virginia, the implications and relationships of which are dealt with in the final chapter.

Chapter eight concerns itself largely with pronunciation and the features of diversity, change, alternation, addition and loss of sounds, which serve to establish the speech ways of the Islanders as remarkably different. To make the presentation of sounds easier, I have avoided the finely graded phonetic notation commonly used and resorted to an alphabetic representation and rhymes, which, of course, mean that the description will suffer some in precision. I trust, however, that the alphabetic approach will be accurate enough to reflect the character of Tangier pronunciation and to show how it differs from other varieties.

In chapter nine, I introduce a feature of speech, generally associated with intonation, that could be described as distinctive, perhaps even unique to Tangier speech ways, if it were not shared, as far as I know, by only one other village, Smith Island, only a few miles away and Tangier's closest neighbor. This proximity hardly justifies a strong argument against uniqueness since both have and have had some intermarriage. What I am speaking of is a kind of utterance they call "over the left talk" or "talking backwards." Some readers would dismiss "talking backwards" merely as sarcasm and irony, neither of which accounts for its special combination of facial expression, gesture, and pitch plus the Islanders' tendency toward the prolonging and tensing of vowels, where the musical tune or coloring expresses meanings contradictory to the words uttered.

The tenth chapter presents the characteristic words of Tangier speech about things, people, places, names, and work along with an inventory of significant usages, some of which seem to be preserved in the speech of Tangier and some other communities of similar history. It is here that one can most clearly get a picture of regional differences of speech and the continuity and change of American English, for vocabulary is the most transient and creative part of a language. The chapter records words for time, distance, weather, household items and equipment, clothing and dress, family matters, places, names, work, expressions, and exclamations.

The eleventh chapter covers the grammatical peculiarities and locutions of Tangier speech. From our schools, we have generally come to think of this as "grammar and correctness" or "good or bad English," notions that should be temporarily dispelled here if we are to appreciate fully the significance of these "peculiarities." The interest here is essentially language variation and change and how some isolated communities tend to preserve "older" forms of speech that have generally disappeared from other communities. The message here is that languages change and vary and never

stand still. What stands as "good" at one period may not at another. This means that "good" and "bad" English cannot properly be discussed without attention to time, place, and people. Try as we can, it seems difficult, despite caveats, to avoid the contrast of standard usage and folk usage with the latter being thought of as defective and bad English. Many features of "folk usage" found in the speech ways of communities like Tangier today were in earlier days not thought of as such, for they were found in the conversations and correspondence of the cultivated, even in those of admirals and kings. Features such as *id de*, *for to tell*, *hadn't orte*, *offrom*, *boilt*, *took sick*, *drownded*, *likete*, *et*, *holp*, and *more older* were not willfully and knowingly perverted by Tangier people. The Islanders were born to them, and if they remain a part of the community, they are likely to use them for a long time, unless some extraordinary incident changes their social and regional conditions. The features covered here are more often found in communities like Tangier and thus have become benchmarks for uncultivated or folk speech.

The final chapter examines the relationships of the speech of Tangier Island and that of some other outermost Atlantic communities—such as Chincoteague of the Delmarva peninsula, Ocracoke of the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and Salter Path and Harkers Island of the Bogue-Core Sound area of North Carolina (Carteret County)—and how their speech ways differ from those of the mainland communities of the states to which they geographically belong. The chapter has an additional concern about the question of the future of these varieties of speech. The most striking thing they share, both laypersons and linguists alike have noticed, is that the residents of these outermost communities speak varieties of English that differ rather sharply from those coastal communities of their mainlands. Despite the varying degrees of isolation, they, like communities everywhere, have been touched by education, mobility, television, the radio, the telephone, and outsiders—developments that some have seriously considered a threat to these communities' ways of life and, as a result, have come to mark them as an "endangered species." No one can deny the influence of these factors, for many residents can be found to modify consciously some selected, conspicuous features of their speech toward what they construe as the standard of their regions. Yet how they talk among themselves remains distinctive enough to draw interest, smiles, and comments from bystanders. Studies tend to speak of these communities as preserving older forms of speech and of being somewhat related to each other, though they are scat-

tered miles apart along the Atlantic seaboard. Some have even remarked how strikingly alike the people seem in appearance, bearing, demeanor, sense of humor, and in the general tenor of their speech. By focusing on selected vowel sounds, I point out their similarities and suggest that these communities and those of Appalachia, and perhaps others, may have had some years ago a common point of departure, where the people had lived long enough to have become a community with a characteristic dialect. What results cannot be taken as a conclusive demonstration of this suggestion, but only as a possible contribution to the nature and relationships of their speech.

The question of future, despite some announcements of doom, is a matter of speculation. Some think of these dialects as at the brink of extinction. What is safe to say is that they are unquestionably under pressure, some more than others, and their longevity at this time can only be determined by the future.

1608

1634

1670

1671

1682

1685

1686

1713

1716

1776

1778

1800

1804

1805

1806

1808

1813

Tangier Chronology

608	Tangier Discovered and Named *Russell Iles* by Captain John Smith
634	Accomack County Established
670	Ambrose White Granted Tangier by Patent by King Charles II
671	Ambrose White Patent Conveyed to Charles Scarburgh and John West
682	An English Map by a John Thornton with the Island Designated as "Tangier"
685	Earliest American Historical Reference to the Island as "Tangier" [Archives of Maryland]
686	Traditional Settlement of Tangier by John Crockett [Not Corroborated]
713	Tangier Conveyed to Elizabeth Scarburgh and Anthony West [Traditional Earliest Historical Reference to Tangier]
716	Tangier Mentioned in the Journal of John Fontaine
776	Birth of Joshua Thomas in Somerset County, Maryland
778	Joseph Crockett and Family Settlement of Tangier [Only Historical Reference of Tangier Settlement]
800	Population 79
804 (?)	Joshua Thomas Built Home on Tangier
805	Christian Conversion of Joshua Thomas
806	Will of Joseph Crockett
808	First Religious Camp Meeting on Tangier
813	British Blockade of the Chesapeake Bay

1814	British Occupation of Tangier in War of 1812
1815	Departure of British Forces from Tangier
1821	Tangier Heavily Damaged by Severe Storm Known as "The September Gust"
1825	A Methodist Society Established
1828	Henry A. Wise [Later Governor of Virginia and Diplomat] Visit to Tangier Camp Meeting
1835	First Church Established as Lee's Bethel [16 Members]
1840	Church Building Constructed
1840	Only Twenty Families on Tangier
1844	Methodist Episcopal Church Split over Slavery into the Southern and Northern Denominations, with Tangier Joining the Northern Denomination
1846	Last Visit of Joshua Thomas to Tangier
1847	First School on Tangier
1853	Death of Joshua Thomas
1856	Lewis Crockett and Katherine Sturgis Started a Sunday School on Tangier
1857	Last Tangier Camp Meeting
1860	Church Building Enlarged
1860	Population 411, Including Six "free Negroes"
1861	*Parson of the Islands* Published by Adam Wallace
1866	Cholera Epidemic
1866	Railroad Reached Crisfield, Maryland
1870	Public School System Established in Virginia
1870	New Church Built as Mariner's Chapel
1871	A School Built
1880	Last Negro Inhabitant
1881	A Post Office Established
1884	Regular Steamboat Service to Tangier

1887	The Methodist Parsonage Built
1889	Storm Submerged the Island
1890	Tangier Lighthouse Erected
1893	Severe Snow Storm Left Tangier Ice-locked
1896	Storm Severely Damaged the Island
1898	Crab Scrape Patented
1899	Swain Memorial Methodist Church Built
1900	Population 1064
1900	Death of Rev. Charles P. Swain
1905	Because of the Scarcity of Oysters Near Them, Tangier Watermen Had To Go To Other Rivers for Their Livelihood
1905	New School Built
1906	Town Charter Granted
1907	Telephone Communication First Established
1907	Steamboat Wharf Built
1907	Appearance of Motorboats
1908	Motion Pictures First shown on Tangier
1909	Wireless Station Established
1910	Town Charter Dissolved
1910	A Public School Erected
1910	The Church, Stores, and Some Families Had Electricity Powered by Generators
1913	Telephone and Wireless Services Discontinued
1914	Severe Winter Storm
1915	Decline in Oystering with Crabbing and Fishing Flourishing
1915	Another Town Charter Granted
1916	President Woodrow Wilson Visit to Tangier
1917	Tangier Ice-locked

/18	Deep Water Harbor and Channel Dredged	1957
	Dr. Gladstone Opened Office on Tangier	1957
	Shirt Factory Built	1958
	Harbor and Channel Widened	1958
	Wallacedale Theatre Established	
	First Homecoming	1961
	Electric Works Provided Electricity for Most Homes for Only 5 P.M.–10 P.M. Until the mid-40s	1963
	Canaan Abandoned	1966
	Moving Picture Theatre Built	1964
	Tangier Population Peaked at 1190	1967
	Crab-Picking Plant Opened and Closed	1969
	Public High School Erected	1970
2	President Herbert Hoover Visit to Tangier on the *Sequoia*	1971
3	August Storm Submerged the Island	1974
6	Tangier Ice-locked by Severe Winter Storm	1976
3	Crabpot Invented	1977
0 (?)	Last Steamboat to Visit Tangier	1977
3	The Jander Family Moved from Connecticut to Tangier	1983
5	The Return of Stella Thomas to Tangier from Foreign Missions	1984
6	Church Schism: Swain Memorial Methodist Church and New Testament Congregation	1990
		1995
6	Rev. James C. Richardson Leaves the Methodist Church and Forms the New Testament Church on Tangier Island	1997
		1997
7	Governor William M. Tuck Attends Tangier Homecoming	1998
7	Electrification Plant Built by the Leadership of Henry Jander	1998
		1998
6	Dr. Gladstone Left Tangier After 38 Years	

57 Gladstone Memorial Health Center Built

57 Dr. Kato Came to Tangier, Married a Local Girl, and Left in 1959

58 Deep Artesian Wells Dug for Water system

58 Andrew Johnson, Former Candidate for Vice-President on the Prohibition Ticket, Preached on Tangier

61 Tangier Lighthouse Dismantled

63 Swain Memorial Built New Education Building

66 Island-Wide Telephone Service

64 First Tours to Tangier

67 West Channel Dredged

69 Airstrip Constructed and Dedicated by Governor Mills E. Godwin

70 Tangier Ice-locked

71 Homecoming Discontinued

74 Death of Hilda Crockett

76 Recreational Center Built

77 Under Water Cable for Electric Power

77 Tangier Ice-locked by Two Severe January Storms, Perhaps the Worst in Its History

83 New Water System Constructed

84 Wind Storm Severely Damaged Airstrip

90 Seawall Constructed

95 Joint Revival with over 200 People Converted

97 Swain Memorial Centennial Celebration (1897–1997)

97 Rev. James C. Richardson Publishes 7 *Acres: The Story of the New Testament Church on Tangier*

98 Tangier Watermen Community Stewardship 2020 Initiative Conference

98 Tangier Homecoming Revival

98 Tangier Rejects the Paul Newman/Kevin Costner Movie *Message in the Bottle*

1998 Later Paul Newman Visits Tangier

1999 Population Just Under 700

1999 Publication of Kirk Mariner's *God's Island: A History of Tangier*

Tangier Island

PART I
Place

1

Colonial and Chesapeake Forebears: Who Were They, Where Did They Come From, and Why Did They Come?

In December 1606 a group of Englishmen set sail in three small ships for the American continent. It was not until the end of April 1607 that they caught sight of the Virginia shoreline. They were not the first to come; they had been preceded by other Englishmen who had failed to establish a colony. This time the graft of English stock took.

The mouth of the Chesapeake Bay must have been a glorious sight for those 105 weary and storm-tossed men, aboard those incredibly small and cramped ships, the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*. Upon entering the Bay, they first landed on its south shore and called it Cape Henry. From there, they sailed up the first river, later named the James, and landed at a spot about thirty-five miles from its mouth, which they named Jamestown. Once settlement had taken place sufficiently, though precariously, they could not resist further exploration, being drawn to tributaries of the James, curious about what might lie beyond the sandy and wooded shorelines.[1] Not long thereafter, they returned to the mouth and set sail northward.

These three ships and 105 gentlemen and others did not constitute a one-shot obsession. They were a part of a larger event resulting from the power and energy—not to mention the prevailing turbulence—of seventeenth-century England, in competition, of course, with other European nations, among which were Portugal and Spain, England's chief rival. Apart from national obsessions and objectives, personal ones underlay this undertaking of such an arduous and risky journey to an unknown land that possibly could have hazards and challenges awaiting the newcomers even harsher than those they had endured at home and on their sea journey. Some historians think that the colonists came for adventure and

discovery; others say, for profit; and still others believe, for a better life, either here or back home. For most of the colonists, one thing was clear: it was more than a journey of curiosity. In retrospect, no matter the reason, and despite the horrendous and unjust dispossession of the natives, the important thing for the world is that they did come; for their coming, as it turned out, shaped the future of the world for the coming three hundred years and more.

Not counting the crew, on board these ships were men labeled as "gentlemen and others." They were such a lot that one could properly wonder whether those who sent them had permanent settlement in mind. Should they have had that in mind, would not they have sent, one could reasonably ask, a different lot, that is, fewer "gentlemen" and more of the "others"? Yet, those who came, despite starvation, disease, poor behavior, and bad management—not to mention the challenges of the wilderness and the hostility of the "savages," as the English chroniclers called them—who chose resistance rather than accommodation, managed to stick and eventually prevail to become in the settling and peopling of Virginia the catalyst for one of the greatest migrations in history. It is striking that at the end of the seventeenth century, only ninety-three years after their arrival at Jamestown, the colonists had cut and wedged their way through raw and new land and stretched themselves northward and southward along the Atlantic slope. What is more, those English colonists, by this time, were no longer such; they had become Americans.

Who were those one hundred and five men who came first on those three small ships, and then who were those who came later on countless small craft during the rest of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century? The first were called "gentlemen and others." The second, from the records of the ports of departure, were commonly referred to as "men of quality and others." Both labels are enough alike to allow us to consider them as one. So, we shall call them "men of quality" and "others." Because many of them clung to the seaboard settlements and became somewhat fixed there as communities, they have "a special claim upon us."[2]

I will discuss the "men of quality" first, for they are not important for this story. Among the "men of quality"—or the "better sort," as they have also been called—could have been an assortment of knights and country or landed gentry, officeholders, professional men, university men, and businessmen. All of them, in one way or another, could have been involved in the colonial enterprise, and some of them, who may not have been doing well, actually could

have come to the colonies. Even included here could have been the less "celebrated or illustrious" younger sons of the gentry, some of whom were untamed and ne'er-do-wells. This "better sort," however, were in the minority by a wide margin. As has been pointed out, this group, small as it was, and later robbed of its specialness, tended to perform "roles out of proportion to their number," in that they were at times called upon to provide leadership in meeting demands of this period.[3]

Marcus Hansen reacts, however, to the common beliefs of Virginia gentry that families of noble blood flocked to Virginia to become the ancestors of the "ante-bellum aristocracy." He hits the nail sharply on its head when he reminds them that "critical research has shorn most of them of their coats-of-arms."[4] Hansen's challenge of the cherished belief that early Virginia was heavily populated by younger sons of the English aristocracy who rushed in droves to establish plantations and to extend nobility and royalty to these shores has been supported by others, one of whom, Alf Mapp states that early colonial society had "only the most tenuous claim to gentility."[5] Nothing more needs to be said about this group.

The "others" are more difficult to define. They without doubt accounted for the majority of those who came, and it is ironic that they were forgotten for years in the histories of Virginia despite the belief of some that the whole colonial undertaking would have failed without them. Earlier historians spoke of them as "rabble," "beggars," "paupers," "rogues," even "whores" and "criminals" and "prisoners from Newgate" and referred to them as "the refuse and off-scourings of London streets."[6] These views are a bit harsh. Current views are more generous, for most seem to think that this much maligned group came from the "middling classes," from all sorts of men of English society.[7] This seems to be the case with those who came on the *Susan Constant*, the *Godspeed*, and the *Discovery*. Apart from the fifty-nine "gentlemen," there were artisans, carpenters, bricklayers, a mason, a barber, a tailor, a clergyman, a surgeon, and some boys and sailors. Later, in 1773–1776, from a representative account of "persons who have taken their passage on Board any Ship or Vessel to go out of this kingdom from any Port in England," the following occupations are found: glass blower, stocking weaver, groom, husbandman, clerk and bookkeeper, cordwainer, surgeon, ropemaker, perukemaker, carpenter and joiner, founder, gardner, watch and clockmaker, bricklayer, bucklemaker, breeches maker, hat maker, butcher, weaver, cabinet maker, carver and gilder, whitesmith, cooper, silk weaver, taylor, footman, tilemaker and burner, painter and glazier, baker, linen weaver,

farmer, smith and farmer, boatbuilder, tutor, sailor, and mariner.[8] There were others, of course, even some well-to-do and educated "gentlemen" who had fallen on bad times and were tired of misery and harsh living conditions and looked to the colonies for "prospects of greater opportunities."[9] Historians thought at first that the "bulk" of the "others" were "laborers,"[10] who, "of course," in England at the time would have been hard-pressed, walking from county to county in search of work. If the lists alone are any indication of those who came, then more recent scholars rightly argue that skilled workers, farmers, and merchants greatly outnumbered the common laborer.[11]

Of those who became emigrants, it is widely accepted that a large number, perhaps well over half, were indentured servants, a group made up of almost all the categories previously mentioned. Yet, disagreement does exist about just who were indentured. Most of the indentured were farmers and skilled or semiskilled workers. Early they were thought of as equals or near equals, perhaps a cut above the level of menials or those of the working classes who had hope of bettering themselves. They came as servants, not as slaves, for a period of time that they, for the most part, voluntarily agreed upon. Yet it would be difficult to describe the social conditions other than a kind of "servitude" or "service," a state hard to brag about, but one that could possibly lead to a better life for most of them. Their arrangements of indenture, perhaps without saying, had to be the result of their not having the means for passage to the colonies and for buying land. What they had to look for after their indenture was the freedom to achieve whatever they were capable of.

With "middling" as the definition of those who were called "the others," let us turn to other questions: their position in English society, the communities they came from, and their motives for coming. From 1654 to 1686, some eleven thousand indentured servants emigrated through Bristol, Liverpool, and London ports (nicely forming a geographical triangle of the heart of England) for the colonies. Of that number, five thousand emigrated to the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia and Maryland. Since the records of Bristol, Liverpool, and London were largely of indentured servants, these figures may represent only a small number of those who emigrated during the period. Though unfavorable opinions of these groups were widely held, they were, as most would admit, the most productive groups in England's working population.

The semiskilled and unskilled were significant in number, coming from clothing and textile trades as well as agriculture. Other trades represented were woodworkers, leathermakers, grocers,

"Map of England." Illustration: Deborah Miller

mariners, metalworkers, and an assortment of others. That sixty-six occupations were represented among those who left Bristol alone indicates what a diversity there was.

A relatively small percentage were gentry and professional, as one would expect. Among these two plus professional trades, such as accounting and clerical work, it is likely that there were those,

like some below them, who found life in England at this time a bit unpleasant and precarious and possibly felt that the colonies offered a better life for them. Also, there were coopers, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, and other particularly skilled men, who were in great demand.[12]

To base a social standing of "middling" on occupations such as these would be difficult, but to think that the representatives of these occupations themselves would not think of differences would be somewhat naive, even though no actual formal social stratification of the group seems to have existed. In considering status among these emigrants, age is, of course, important because most of them were from twenty-one to twenty-four years old, which meant that, as indentured servants, they probably did not have property and money to begin with. If they did, they more than likely would have bought themselves into the headright system, meaning that they would become owners of at least fifty acres of land.

Women did not become part of the enterprise in a big way until mid-century, when their absence was beginning to become a serious threat to the entire undertaking because it is obvious that the need for more population could not continue to be met only by immigration. To offset mortality, the natural means had to become a factor. The women who emigrated were largely from the working classes and, like the men, were generally in their lower twenties and some even younger. Not much is known about their occupational backgrounds; they were generally listed in the departure records as "spinsters" and "widows." At this time, the average age of a first marriage was about twenty-four, but many married at a much younger age. Many of these women worked in the fields alongside the men, and others went into the service of families nearby. Though marriage was the major attraction for the women, many went for work because there was plenty of it with relatively good pay.[13]

In sum, then, the sorts of people who emigrated to the Chesapeake were predominantly young adults from a broad cross section of English society. Probably about half of them were either minors or unskilled workers of various types, whereas the rest came from agricultural occupations and a miscellany of crafts and trades that defies any simple classification. Their youthfulness indicates that within their respective occupations they were of relatively low social standing. They were mainly nonhouseholders and with little personal wealth. They came from the middle and lower echelons of that section of society that contemporaries labeled "the Commons": the ordinary people who made up the vast majority of En-

gland's population and who were obliged to work with their hands to earn a living.[14]

Where did these colonists come from? To say where certain colonists specifically came from would be difficult. The answer to the question, however, is simple: they came from towns and villages all over England, not just from London, Bristol, and Liverpool, the seventeenth-century ports of departure. It is important to keep in mind that the migration to the Chesapeake and to the other colonies of the eastern seaboard was preceded in England by heavy migrations to the larger and more populous areas from villages, market towns, provincial cities, and counties all over England and parts of Wales, Ireland, and Scotland. Early, the colonists came from London and the Home Counties, those closest to London (especially Surrey, Kent, Essex, and Middlesex), the southeastern region, and most certainly some from other nearby counties. Later, from mid-century to the third quarter, most left from Bristol and nearby counties, such as Hereford, Gloucester, and Oxford, and southern Wales. During the last quarter, Liverpool was probably the busiest port of departure, drawing from northwestern England and southern Wales.

Generally, the people leaving from these ports were probably within a fifty-mile radius of each of them, which seems to say that proximity determined the port of choice. Some emigrants were surely from these larger urban areas and ports, others may have been recent arrivals, and still others may have been residents for several months, even years or more. Most evidence seems to hold that there were no great masses moving to these ports for the colonies. As indicated previously, they came from all over, generally in ones, twos, and threes and only seldom in bunches of ten to twenty.

They may have been initially looking for work and better lives in these urban centers, only to be disappointed, and finally, perhaps reluctantly, they settled for a hope for opportunities in Virginia and Maryland or in other colonies. Others may have left for other reasons, but the description was probably true of most. All in all, then, their places of origin were scattered. During the seventeenth century, considering the turmoil and lack of work, London attracted people from everywhere and so did other urban centers.

Emigration to the Chesapeake was, then, squarely within the context of migration within England itself—that is, young and middle-aged people in despair moving from town to town looking for work and security. That colonization of America took place during this period of civil, religious, and economic disturbances in En-

gland is not an accidental sequence of events. Different conditions would have, perhaps, yielded a different history.

Specifically, why did they emigrate? For generations, our schools taught us that our ancestors left England for the New World to be free and to worship as they pleased. No doubt, once the settlement enterprise was underway, some left for these reasons. Another explanation is that they had no choice and were "spirited away" under mysterious conditions and sent abroad against their will for profit. Would either of these reasons, alone or altogether, account for such a movement of people? It is even harder to believe that these hordes sought adventure and gold, as some have offered. They knew hardship and poverty, but were they that naive? Times were harsh in seventeenth-century England, but it was so for the gentlemen class as well as for "the others." Many were hard-pressed to make a living, and the hope of these and others for a tolerable and better life was rapidly diminishing.

If one believes that "history speaks clearest in the words of those who live it," then this summary of the plight of John Harrower, an indentured servant in Virginia from 1773 to 1776, who was the only indentured servant who left a journal of his experiences, will make it crystal clear why so many left for the colonies:

> Forty years of age, he had now made the most critical decision of his life—to leave his wife and children behind and continue to search for the means to support them. Three months' fruitless pursuit of employment in Scotland and England, when both were prostrated by depression, had left him with but a single alternative to destitution. He accepted it—in the form of a contract called an indenture. In exchange for ocean passage and an uncertain future in a raw new country he had pledged the next four years of both his labor and his independence. . . . The panic of 1772 intensified the already desperate economic crisis. But Harrower expected to find work in England. At worst, he "did not intend going further than Holland" in search of temporary relief. Yet this capable man found that he was unable to obtain passage to Holland or to find any kind of employment in the seaports of Scotland and eastern England. Sorely disappointed, Harrower walked the eighty long miles from Portsmouth to London, paying for his meager subsistence en route by gradually selling off his capital—a small supply of the famous Shetland stockings. A stranger in London, he wandered through that great city "like a blind man without a guide." Appeals to merchants and shipmasters for work brought only shrugs. Answering advertisements in the newspapers proved fruitless, for hundreds of unemployed were starving and many "good people" were begging. . . . Finally, "reduced to the last shilling," he "was obliged to engage to go to Virginia for four years."[15]

Most of the people like Harrower were in the midst of a grinding poverty that was about to wreck their lives, and they left because they wanted a better life. As convincing as this story is, the final answer comes down to the fact that, above all, they wanted land and as much as they could get. With land, a mere economic reality, they knew that their lives would be freer, richer, and even safer. They were not surprised, once established somewhat on these shores, that the force of class remained, but society, they found, was more fluid. Land was, of course, the driving force and opened the opportunity for a share in the good things of life. The relationships they found here, moreover, were different. The "root, hog, or die" conditions in the wilderness pressed the different classes a lot closer than they wanted to be. They learned very quickly, however, that cutting down trees, clearing land, and feeding and defending themselves left no room or time for a concern about social privilege.[16]

The settlement of the Chesapeake Bay region, Virginia and Maryland, reflects the conditions and struggles of the colonists, in general, in search of greater opportunities and better living conditions. However, despite the "force of practical exigency" of settlement, class distinctions did not vanish, though there was some social fluidity. For Virginia, specifically the county of Accomack, Jennings Cropper Wise, in his *Ye Kingdome of Accawmacke on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century,* describes the pioneers of Accomack as sprung from sturdy English stock. I wish to quote Wise at length, for he represents here a comprehensive view of those days and a perpetual mind-set that Virginians are well aware of:

> A decade or more elapsed before the English gentry made its appearance. After 1630, large numbers of the latter class poured into the little sea-girt land. The influx of settlers was so sudden that the better class was not forced through the usual leveling process, when social barriers fall before the stress of common danger and enterprise. In general, it is only after the pioneer has been through the sieve, a period of toil and deprivation, that the elements of society become refined and segregated. But on the Eastern Shore, the generous hand of nature and aborigine, alike, combined to do away with the elementary process of colonization. The gentleman immigrant assumed his accustomed role from the first upon this virgin soil. As a result then, of the easy conditions, a number of distinct social classes were to be found among the inhabitants as early as 1625–30. First there were the large planters, many of whom came from Northampton and Norfolk. They monopolized all the offices and controlled affairs generally. Next, came a class

> of carpenters, ship-builders, and mechanics of all trades, who acquired small land holdings, and gradually became planters of a second social order, comprising a sturdy yeomanry which exists to this day. The third class, and one which increased rapidly after the flood tide of immigration set in, was that of the huntsmen, fishermen, oystermen, and islanders, a race of dauntless seamen, unexcelled in their special pursuits by any people in the world. Their very peculiarity brought them into such striking prominence that they seem to have impressed the historians to the utter exclusion of the other elements of Accomack society. The romance of the sea has ever proved attractive to the Eastern Shoreman, even of the higher classes, but the liberty of the vast marshes, the isolated islands, the secluded inlets, stocked as they were with fish and fowl, early attracted a class of lazy ne'er-do-wells, who soon degenerated into a lower order of longshoremen. A fourth, and small class, was that of the white servant. In general, the distinction was ephemeral, for but few whites who entered the service of another remained for a long period in this menial condition. According to his individual character, the servant, at the termination of his servitude, attached himself to the yeomanry or the longshoremen. It is impossible to judge accurately of the size of this class from the immigration records, for gentlemen were frequently listed as servants, and many young men of superior social position entered the service of another for a period long enough to defray by their labor the cost of transportation.[17]

The passage clearly reflects the attitude and admiration of one with aristocratic leanings and preferences; but it seems forced and too pat to be an account of the actual conditions. Wise states that the "better class" avoided the "leveling process" and "assumed its accustomed role from the first upon this virgin soil." R. Bennett Bean, in his *Peopling of Virginia,* seems to present a different picture:

> Of the forty-four Bourgesses who sat in the assembly of 1629, seven were listed as servants; among thirty-nine Assemblymen in 1632, six appeared as servants. In 1652 eight or nine were brought over by others and by 1662 the Bourgesses were said to be composed for the most part of men who came over to Virginia as servants.[18]

It is true, of course, that "servants" can be a misleading term, for many of them were, as we know, indentured after they came here, which meant that they could have come from the gentlemen class, as many of them did. Bean acknowledged this, but he also makes clear that the yeomanry (as indentured servants) was the most important factor in the life of Virginia, and he among many others

believed that, without this influx, the Chesapeake colonies would have failed, basically because the majority of indentured servants were farmers and skilled workers.

That the gentry assumed their customary roles of "controlling affairs," which to a certain extent no one can deny, tends to leave one, as many landed Virginians even today believe, with the feeling that the colonial undertaking was successful because it resulted in a mere transplantation of social and governmental institutions dividing people on the basis of birth as in England. This attitude surely was in the minds of the "men of quality" as they landed on these shores. Even Reverend John Cotton and John Winthrop, cloaked in religious robes, of New England "feared and detested democracy and cursed it as the meanest and worst of all forms of government."[19] Yet, they, like others of the "better sort," grudgingly came to the realization of a rather compelling fact: that the wilderness and the natives, what Wise romantically called "the generous hand of nature and aborigine," were there, and the colonists, no matter their former status, had to deal with them. Pretentious demeanor and frilly dress and ornamental walking sticks would hardly do. All came to realize that "incessant toil of wilderness breaking" demanded different relationships and all the energy they could muster.

This distinct and highly stratified group seems an oversimplification of the early Chesapeake society, especially so when one keeps in mind that even seventeenth-century England was experiencing some cracks in that traditional world. After the clearing of the land, the allotment of parcels, and the building of roads, the drawing up of patents and charters followed and very likely fell to those who were able to do such things. However, these, like most matters, were concerns of all, as they plunged headlong into the wilderness. It is hard to imagine that the "others"—having taken great risks and enduring more hardships than the "better sort" in crossing three thousand miles of ocean under the meanest conditions conceivable and having provided the labor for clearing the land and building shelter—would merely sit aside and ungrudgingly be dominated completely by those with previous status and connections in England who may have thought they were entitled for these reasons alone to the better cut of their labors. Emigrants to the Chesapeake, or for that matter, to the colonies as a whole, did not fit the traditionally constructed mold of "men of quality" and "others," as that classification implies and possibly had been practiced. Something had to give, and from what level required lit-

tle imagination. The vagaries of wealth, status, and connections could not have completely ruled numbers, energy, and hope.

As indicated earlier, "all kinds came," expecting hard work, but economic opportunity and rewards of individual effort. Early, they came to realize that they needed only government enough to do for them as a whole what needed to be done and could not be done by individual effort. Implicit here and explicit, it might be added, in the "Mayflower Compact" is the notion of the "consent of the governed," words that are best known through Jefferson, but a notion that had been enunciated earlier in England and even on these shores. This notion, of course, meant that the apparent preference for the social stratification scale of the English was not an accomplished and a presumably irreversible fact in the minds of large numbers of immigrants who landed on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay.[20] What determined the bent of mind of these colonists was something that either was denied them or that they were losing in England—which just happens to be the most important symbol of English aristocracy and wealth: land, the major variable in the determination of the social contract and the nature of governmental relations. Alf Mapp offers a more realistic view:

> To most pioneering Virginians . . . class divisions were not permanent barriers to be accepted with resignation, but obstacles which a man might prove his mettle by surmounting. Aristocrats, as in any society, were few. But this exclusiveness made aristocracy most desirable. The ambitious artisans and small farmers of the colony did not wish to abolish the upper class, but rather to gain admission to its ranks. Many of them confused the trappings of Britain's aristocracy with the quality itself. Virtually all believed that acquisition of its materials was the surest means of attaining the sought for status.[21]

There were, of course, differences in wealth and status in the colonies from the beginning, both material and psychological, but to gain the title of "landed gentry" meant the acquisition of a new mind-set and land—and, as previously stated, "a lot of it." Owning extensive tracts of land meant influence and social priority, as it still does. Colonials in official position had huge acreages set aside for them. They were, in a sense, "land rich but cash poor," which meant that their acreage would in time be available for enterprising individuals. With land everywhere so available, there was no reason for ambitious and hardworking colonists, no matter their original status, instead to work for others, rather than to work for themselves, to acquire as much land as they could handle, to build on it,

and then to go on to acquire more land wherever it was available. Apart from those officeholders and those in authority with their special large grants of land, got in part by devious ways, there were a middle group of farmers who sprang from varied backgrounds and small farmers more independent than they had ever been before.[22] There were also the independent artisans and tradesmen who were in increasing demand for their skills and had hope of attaining, like others, position, wealth, and influence. Finally, the poorer groups, without any chance at all in England to acquire anything, had opportunities here to dream and to have, through a combination of indentured service and the headright system—which throughout the seventeenth-century became the means of supplying immigrants in Virginia for meeting the demands for labor for the production of tobacco and for replenishing a declining population.

Indentured service and the headright system were not as repulsive and degrading as they sound and as thought for a long time. They offered opportunities for many who would not otherwise have had a chance. The former was a reward for a period of years, usually four to seven, of labor, and the latter was a reward of a grant of fifty acres of land for each person (servant) that one transported to Virginia. These systems, which, in a sense, smack of medieval serfdom, did offer life in a new land for thousands of poorer people, much needed for the planters, and sustained immigration that saved Virginia and other Chesapeake colonies. Until the colonies got to a point of supplying people by natural means, such systems were crucial to support the tobacco industry.

Many of the colonists were not willing to work for other colonists simply because they also had ambitions of owning land and becoming "masters of estates." Servitude was servitude, but a tolerable position, because it provided an opportunity to cross the Atlantic for a chance at a new life.[23] Many of the indentured servants in the Bay region did not become such as part of a contract made in England but of their own free will in the Chesapeake to avoid personal loss or disaster of one kind or another. Terms of indenture came, of course, to an end, and many of those indentured became free and independent landholders and artisans to make their own way.[24]

The Chesapeake Bay, one of the world's largest bodies of water of its kind, formed some twelve thousand years ago as a result of the last glacial melt, runs its course north-south parallel to the Atlantic slope and is cut and fed into by many converging rivers, streams, and creeks, creating more than four thousand miles of tidal shoreline. The Bay has millions of people living along its

shores and provides for them and visitors from all over a multitude and variety of opportunities for sports, recreation, and business: swimming, fishing, crabbing, oystering, clamming, hunting, and sailing. For years, it has been known for its prodigious yields of seafood, providing a great variety of culinary delights and generating scores of millions of dollars annually. As many know, because of its extensive fisheries, H. L. Mencken spoke of it as "the immense protein factory." Present also are a diversity of plants, animals, birds, and other organisms along and in the coastal lagoons and creeks, which draw the interests of residents, visitors, and scientists alike. Though presently declining in some of its natural resources and beauty, much remains, and significant efforts and progress are being made to return it to its former splendor.

No one has spoken more glowingly of the Bay than Captain John Smith in his *Description of Virginia*. Obviously pleased with what he sees, Smith describes the region with accuracy (as any reader who knows the Bay can confirm) and as a place that present-day inhabitants can well appreciate. He first notes the climatic conditions and describes the topological mappings:

> The temperature of this country doth agree well with English constitutions being once seasoned to the country. Within it is a country that may have the prerogative over the most pleasant places of Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, for large and pleasant navigable rivers, heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a place for mans habitation being of our constitutions, were it fully manured and inhabited by industrious people. There are mountaines, hils, plaines, valleyes, rivers and brookes, all running most pleasantly into a faire Bay compassed but for the mouth with fruitful and delightsome land. In the Bay and rivers are many Isles both great and small, some woody, some plaine, most of them low and not inhabited. This Bay lieth North and South in which the water floweth neare 200 miles and hath a channell for 140 miles, of depth betwixt 7 and 15 fadome, holding in breadth for the most part of 10 to 14 miles. From the head of the Bay at the north, the land is mountanous, and so in a manner from thence by a Southwest line; So that the more Southward, the farther off from the Bay are those mounetaines. From which fall certaine brookes which after come to five principall navigable rivers. These run from the Northwest into the Southeast, and so into the west side of the Bay, where the fall of every River is within 20 or 15 miles one of an other.[25]

Smith then speaks of the Bay as lying within an agreeable geographic zone:

> The sommer is hot as in Spaine; the winter colde as in Fraunce or England. The heat of sommer is in June, Julie, and August, but commonly

> the coole Breeses asswage the vehemencie of the heat. The chiefe of winter is halfe December, January, February, and halfe March. The colde is extreame sharpe, but here the proverbe is true that no extreame long continueth. The windes here are variable, but the like thunder and lightning to purifie the aire, I have seldom either seene or heard in Europe. From the Southwest came the greatest gustes with thunder and hael. The Northwest winde is commonly coole and bringeth faire weather with it. From the North is the greatest cold, and from the East and South-East as from the Bermudas, fogs and raines. Some times there are great droughts other times much raine, yet great necessity of neither.[26]

In speaking of the lower Bay, Smith observes:

> There is but one entraunce by sea into this country and that is at the mouth of a very goodly Bay the widenesse whereof is neare 18 or 20 miles. The cape on the Southside is called Cape Henry in honour of our most noble Prince. The shew of the land there is a white hilly sand like unto the Downes, and along the shores great plentie of Pines and Firres. The north Cape is called Cape Charles in honour of the Duke of Yorke.[27]

In a section called "The Accidents that happened in the Discoverie of the Bay," Smith speaks of the gusting and menacing winds as he approaches certain islands:

> Passing along the coast, searching every inlet, and bay fit for harbours and habitations seeing many Iles in the midst of the bay, we bore up for them, but ere wee could attaine them, such an extreame gust of wind, raine, thunder, and lightning happened, that with great daunger we escaped the unmerciful raging of that ocean-like water.[28]

These "Isles" are thought to be that small southernmost group of islands mid-bay just below the current Virginia-Maryland boundary, which Smith called "Russell Iles" after his Doctor of Physicke, Walter Russell, one of his fourteen men on this voyage of discovery. This group of islands was also called "Western Isles," obviously with relation to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, particularly Accomack. One of the small groups became known as "Tangier," variously referred to as "The Tangier Isles," "The Tangier Group," "The Tangiers Isles," and "The Tangiers Group," names thought by some to have been given by Smith, from his earlier adventures in Morocco.

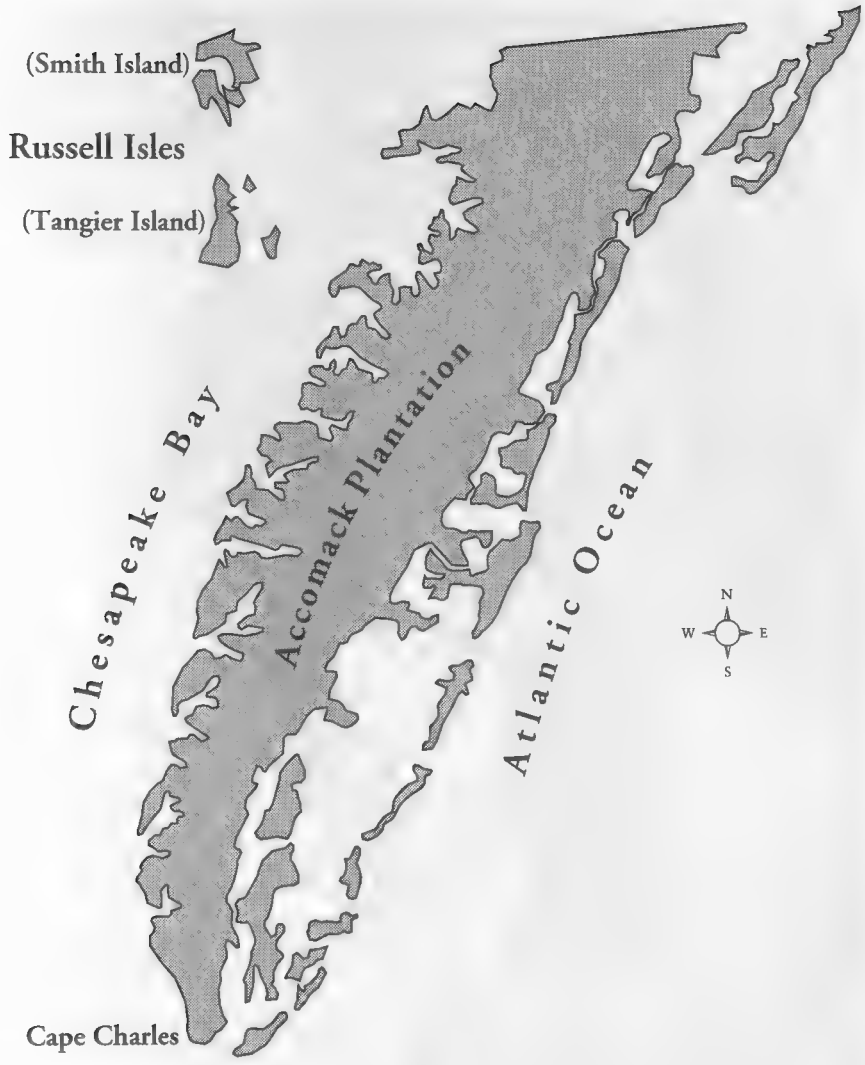
Though the geography of Virginia is not a major concern in itself here, it is a matter of some importance, because Tangier, a part of

the Eastern Shore, sits in a position with major geographical, historical, and dialectal areas astride it. What is more, we need to consider the traditional divisions of Virginia for obvious reasons and to distinguish Hampton Roads and Tidewater because they are frequently used, and often confused, designations. The geographical subdivisions of Virginia, depending upon one's purposes and reasons, are often demarcated differently. With a fuller description of Tidewater and its distinction from Hampton Roads, it is for the moment enough to think of Virginia as constituting three major sections: Tidewater, Piedmont, and the Valley.

There is, as indicated earlier, some misunderstanding about Tidewater and Hampton Roads. Hampton Roads should be thought of as a well-defined area with a harbor formed by the channel through which the James and Elizabeth rivers flow into the Chesapeake Bay and bordered by the cities of Newport News and Hampton to the north and those of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake to the south. It should not be surprising that many—including native Virginians, even those who live in the cities mentioned—refer to this area as Tidewater. Naming practices in the general area indirectly encourage such a reference, formerly "Tidewater Tides" and now "Norfolk Tides"—for example, the International League's baseball team located in Norfolk.

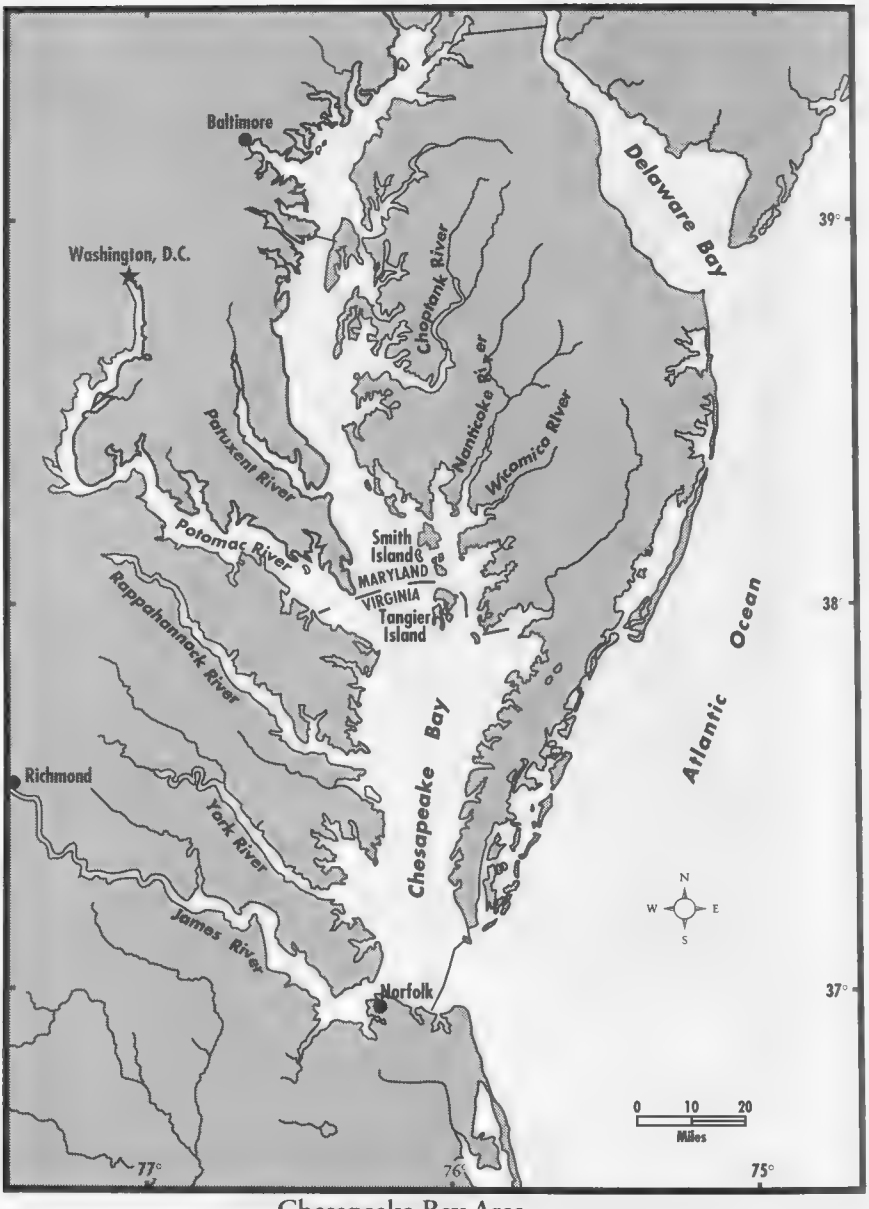
Tidewater historically has been, and should be, thought of as all that area of Virginia touching the waters of the Chesapeake Bay to include a detached section of it on the eastern side (the Eastern Shore). Tidewater, to be more precise, is that portion of Virginia in which the tide rises and falls—that is, all of Virginia east of the fall line, across the Bay, even to the Eastern Shore. At its longest, it is about one hundred sixty miles north-south and roughly marked by an imaginary line drawn from Alexandria on the Potomac River to Fredericksburg on the Rappahanock to West Point on the York and Richmond on the James. Nowhere, from the determination of the tidal reaches of these rivers to their mouths (the point at which they empty into the Bay), is there greater than twenty miles of land distant. In this stretch called "Tidewater," there are about two thousand miles of shoreline on ocean, bay, and tidal rivers, whose names fittingly echo their English and Native-American past.

Susie Ames in her *Studies of the Virginia Eastern Shore in the Seventeenth Century* calls attention to Charles II's leasing of "The Dominion of Virginia" and "The Territory of Accomack" and observes that "The Territory of Accomack is of Virginia and yet is apart from her."[29] As Ames makes clear, however, this territory, which was organized in 1634, was the entire peninsula of Virginia



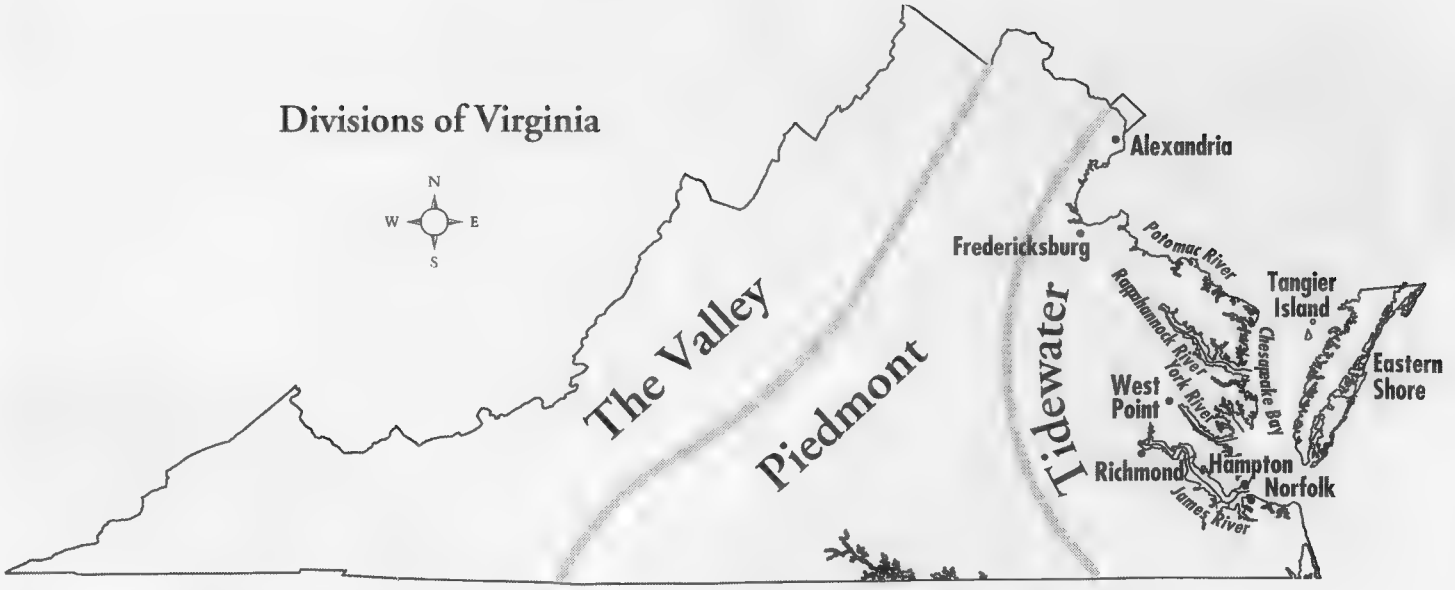
Russell Isles 1610

"Map Showing Russell Isles." Illustration: Deborah Miller



Chesapeake Bay Area

"Map of Chesapeake Bay Area." Illustration: Deborah Miller



"Map of Divisions of Virginia." Illustration: Deborah Miller

and historically, politically, and socially a part of Virginia and "appropriately called the Eastern Shore of Virginia."[30] The Eastern Shore of Virginia, about seventy miles long and twenty at its widest, has many rivers, creeks, coves, and necks of land, making its coast highly irregular. On either side, the seaside facing the Atlantic and the bayside facing the Chesapeake, are numerous islands—which through the years have been uninhabited, then inhabited, and later uninhabited again through the forces of winds and tides. Of these islands, some are within easy reach, others not. Only two are inhabited today: Smith Island, just north of the Maryland-Virginia boundary, and Tangier Island, just below it. Smith spoke of them as ". . . great and small, some woody, some plain low and not inhabited . . . giving exceeding pleasure."[31]

2

Tangier Beginnings and Development

How did this whole matter of English emigration and colonial settlement play out on Tangier Island? To be frank, uncertainty about settlement here prevails. The bits of information about the first settlers—who they were, where they came from, and why and when they came—are not well documented and seem to be only shards of facts and rather laconic responses to satisfy the not-so-curious. What has been said before would essentially apply to those who settled Tangier. It would be safe to say, however, that with the settlement of Tangier one cannot be thinking about the world of the "men of quality" but must consider the world of the "others" as candidates for the settlement, though the original patentees were of the former class.

Apart from the few references to Tangier as place, there is little of certainty that can be said about it during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries until 1778, the earliest mention of a family or families actually living there. Before then, according to court records, Tangier, among other islands, had been used for livestock ranges. In fact, they record that Tangier, which had been owned by two families, was used as cattle ranges until after the Revolutionary War. The census of 1800 indicates that a few people were living on Tangier, as they were on other bayside and seaside islands. To say more, we must resort to the language of speculation, using such words as "possibly" and "perhaps" to indicate restrictions.

To begin, I shall consider who they were. It would take a powerful argument to prove that they were any more than skilled or semi-skilled working-class people, or descendants of such, maybe even former indentured servants, who had garnered some working knowledge of farming and livestock as indentured servants with gumption enough to strike out on their own to a place where they would be left alone or could control the amount of intrusion in their lives. It is likely that many in servitude at this time shared the chores with slaves and that their lives were closely intertwined

without much distinction because they were sometimes being referred to as "Negroes and other slaves." What is more, about this time indentured servants were consistently being replaced by newly imported slaves. This development created a group of people who, after their terms of indenture, were not particularly enthralled about the prospects of continuing to work for the plantations and consequently sought other things. Many of this group were ne'er-do-wells when they first came to the Chesapeake and remained so. Others improved themselves significantly and became independent as landowners. A Joseph Crockett who purchased 450 acres of land on Tangier in 1778 may have been one of those. Thus, we have the beginning of Tangier as a community, first likely as a farming one and, later, almost exclusively as a community of watermen.

Information about the historical and social settlement of Tangier is scarce, and what is known is tied in very closely with the geography and history of the lower Chesapeake region, particularly Virginia's Eastern Shore. Those things known about Tangier do not confirm the popular history of the residents and of the hyperbolic journalists who write about Tangier and who are quick to repeat in their stories unsubstantiated facts and happenings as if they subscribe to the dictum "don't let the facts get in the way of a good story." Apart from the first mention of the Island, along with some others, as 'Russells Isles,' by Captain John Smith, the earliest historical reference to Tangier was in 1713 in the Accomack court records. For this year, in the words of Ralph T. Whitelaw, "two patents [were] granted jointly by Elizabeth Scarburgh, widow, and Anthony West, one was for 900 acres called Tangier Island, being a reissue of the 400-acres patent by Ambrose White in 1670 and 500-acres surplus upon it; the other was 170 acres of new land south of Tangier called Sandy Beach Island, probably the fish-hooked beach, which is now attached to it."[1]

Tangier tradition has it that Tangier Island was settled in 1686 by a John Crockett and his eight sons who had come from the Western Shore. This account is troublesome and almost certainly not true. That Ambrose White, however, was granted a patent in 1670 and others were granted or inherited acreage[2] in 1673 and 1678 provides some basis, perhaps, for its credibility—but the granting of a patent, one must keep in mind, did not necessarily mean actual settlement. During the seventeenth century, many acres of land were granted to many individuals, conveying to them fee simple title to public lands, but these lands were not always lived on. That patents did not always indicate settlement can be a problem in that the actual living on a parcel of land could predate or postdate its

patent by years.[3] A major difficulty, and more relevant for Tangier, is that many land patents were often used for speculation rather than for settlement. Land sales would, of course, be better indications of active settlement, but these did not appear until the latter part of the eighteenth century.[4] Turman, in her *The Eastern Shore of Virginia,* states, according to county records, that Tangier was under the ownership of two families (Scarburgh and West), and used as a cattle range until after the Revolution.[5] To be fair, even though the granting of a patent did not necessarily mean settlement, one can assume, on the other hand, that the Scarburgh and West families may have had some tenants looking after their land and livestock. However, having tenants, which were probably only men, can hardly be construed as settlement, even though they may have been in residence.

There are, however, two other early references to Tangier. The first is Donald C. Shomette's finding in the *Archives of Maryland* a reference to Tangier for 1685, which he renders this way: "Stevens and his crew of two neared Watts island, a small, sandy islet east of Tangier Island and off the Bay side of Accomack County, Virginia. . . ."[6] The account has it that the three men went ashore and built and huddled around a fire. Suddenly they were accosted by seven men, one of whom was a well-known picaroon accompanied by three "Watts Islanders" belonging to the plantation of a certain "Mr. Jenkins."[7] Watts Island today, much smaller than in 1685, is only about four miles from Tangier Island, one of several known earlier as the Tangier Group or Tangier Isles. Were these Watts Islanders inhabitants of the Island, or were they tenants or indentured servants of an absentee landlord? Furthermore, if Watts Island was inhabited, would it not be likely that Tangier was also? Not necessarily, because Tangier was surrounded by very shallow water. Could it be that these "inhabitants" were possibly "lookouts" placed there by authorities because shipping at this time, even earlier and later, was immense and the Bay was swarming with pirates, picaroons, and privateers who frequented, even lingered, in the coves, canals, and inlets of these islands for both concealment and plunder? This activity had begun soon after the Jamestown settlement, had intensified, and had persisted throughout the eighteenth century. During the long period before these islands could be thought of as real communities, the victims of piracy all along the Bay thought of them as hovels and seedbeds for villains and pillage.

A second account is found in the journal of a John Fontaine, an Irish Huguenot, written during the years 1710–19. His entry for

November 29, 1716, is "At seven we see the Tangier Islands."[8] So, we have, then, six references (1670, 1673, 1678, 1685, 1713, and 1716) to Tangier, which certainly establishes it as a place, but not as a community.

The first Crockett to have owned land on Tangier, according to the *Landbooks* of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, was in 1778, when a Joseph Crockett bought from William and Anna Maria Andrews (heirs of the original patents) 475 acres.[9] Although the Crockett family name had been known for more than a century in the southern part of Maryland, the Accomack records show nothing about Crocketts owning land on the Eastern Shore of Virginia before this 1778 date.[10] Moreover, R. Bennett Bean, in his *The Peopling of Virginia*, for about the same period and even later, records the Crockett name only in the western part of Virginia.[11]

Another questionable "fact" has to do with the purchase of land from the Pocomoke Indians:

> about the year 1666 . . . one Mr. West came from the mainland and purchased it (Tangier) for "two overcoats," and some years later, sold a part of it to one John Crockett.[12]
>
> For many years, until its settlement by the White man, Tangier Island remained the hunting and fishing grounds of the Pocomoke Indians . . . and tradition informs us the island was purchased from the Pocomoke Indians for two overcoats about 1650–66 by two White men who came from some part of the Eastern Shore of Virginia.[13]

These two passages were probably the sources for the many magazine and newspaper articles about Tangier. The first is from the so-called "Swain Manuscript," which runs for several pages and was written around 1900 by an early preacher, who was honored by having the local Methodist church named after him. Samuel Warren Hall, in his sociological study of Tangier in the 1930s, quoted this Swain passage and stated that Swain did not disclose his source, and yet he himself went on to conclude that Wests and Crocketts had lived on Tangier in the early 1700s—[14]which cannot be corroborated. The second passage is from John Neely Mears' pamphlet about Tangier written in 1936. In this interesting and favorable study of Tangier, however, Mears, at the time editor for the *Eastern Shore News,* also has no sources for these claims and others that he made, all of which have appeared, as mentioned, frequently in newspaper and magazine articles.

In addition to Swain and Mears, others have spoken of the Cornish descent of the Islanders and of Cornish as their ancestral language. Many settlers during the seventeenth century came from

the West Country of England. Numerous studies confirm this from departure records, but generally with the caution to readers that it is difficult to speak with certainty about the exact place of origin of these settlers. The Paullin and Wright historical atlas shows that only a handful of emigrants from Cornwall came to the colonies during the seventeenth century and is silent about their origin and destination.[15] This claim deserves special emphasis because the major concern of this book is the speech of the Tangier community, where, of course, both history and settlement—not to mention social matters—are crucially important. To say, therefore, that Cornish is the ancestral language of Tangier Islanders is, in fact, no more than saying that its origin is southwestern England, for English, for all practical purposes, had been the language of Cornwall for generations. For that matter, even if the whole population at the time of settlement had been Cornish—considering that the Accomack census of 1800 showed only a list of seventy-nine, thirty-three of whom were Crocketts—would not the in-migration from that period on have a drastic bearing on any variety of English that prevailed? To my knowledge, there are not even any quaint dialect pieces that can be found to be clearly traceable to Cornish or to any other particular dialect. The thrust of a much admired book on the language and history of Cornwall, dominated by the English since Anglo-Saxon times, is that through the centuries the influence of Cornish on English (of England) is "negligible."[16] In short, the recurring observation that Tangier settlers and Tangier speech are Cornish seems to remain a fatal fascination of local historians and journalists.

Not much is known about Tangier as a village or community during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—apart from those records of patents—and from them, only information about the exchange of patents and the inheritance of certain parcels of land. This seems to suggest that Tangier during the period was almost exclusively used for cattle raising or some other agricultural endeavor, perhaps requiring only a few tenants or none at all, for it had the Bay as a natural fence. From this evidence, as meager as it is, it is hard to imagine anything like an active community of residents until just before the Revolution, despite the popular claim of Tangier as having been settled in 1686 by a John Crockett and his eight sons, a claim also embossed on a historical marker in the yard of Swain Memorial United Methodist Church. Moreover, until more evidence is available, one can only be amused by the belief in the Pocomoke Indian sale and the Cornish linguistic ancestry of Tangier speech.

Though remote, Tangier, like other island communities, was a part of the general development of the Eastern Shore of Virginia, which itself, because of its isolation from the Western Shore, or mainland, was somewhat removed from big early historical events. Though Tangier had little impact on what ultimately took shape on the mainland of the Eastern Shore, the Island had to be shaped by the developments on the eastern shores of Virginia and Maryland. Accepting Joseph Crockett's purchase of 450 acres of land in 1778 from the descendants of the original patentees as the beginning of a community on Tangier, almost a hundred years later than commonly believed, we can begin to consider origins with some confidence.

When the colonists began to have problems with England and words of revolution were shouted, there is little doubt that Tangier Island, Smith Island, and some of the others were inhabited. Even though they seemed to have real communities on them at this time, these communities were small, and, what is more, they inherited the stigma of their alleged earlier associations with pirates. What made matters worse for them during the Revolution was that Tangier and the other islands were partially Loyalist. Before the Revolution became the major focus of the colonies, Maryland leaders made it known that they thought the people of Tangier Island were involved in some of the picaroon escapades, perhaps because the Island was the winter quarters of the notorious pirate Joseph Wheland, and were "among the principal perpetrators of the recent depredations in Maryland waters."[17] They clearly believed that "nothing less than a total depopulation of the islands by force would eliminate the problem."[18] With this threat lingering, the push of the British for their loyalty, and the Americans' charge of treason for their Tory leanings, they were really put into a precarious position. Some Islanders who may have been cozy with the picaroons and now had little to do with them and thought less of the British created the problem of dealing with the desires of three groups, not to mention their own. The picaroons wanted supplies to sell to the British, the British wanted bases and supplies from them, and the Americans, if they could not depend on them, had plans of raiding and destroying their cattle and crops to keep them from backing into the hands of the British.

Jefferson, then governor of Virginia, wrote to the governor of Maryland advising him to do as he planned to do—that is, to take all provisions available on the Island—except enough for the Islanders' subsistence—to support their cause, for the general feeling in Virginia and Maryland was that they were "the most dangerous

enemy we have to watch."[19] All this seems to be evidence enough to say that Tangier around the time of the Revolution, and perhaps several years before, was, though small, an active community. To suggest that a thriving community existed earlier would be mere speculation.

Once the Revolution had run its course in 1783, the lives of the few families on Tangier—perhaps numbering no more than seventy-five people, if that many, considering that the recorded population in 1800 was seventy-nine—were for a while probably preoccupied with everyday tasks, basically farming and cattle raising, and even fishing and oystering. The common view that the Revolution had little impact on the lives of Tangier Islanders was not true, however, for the War of 1812. Excluding the religious fervor that swept and engulfed Tangier in the mid-1800s, as it did the eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia and even much of the Atlantic Seaboard, the most momentous event in Tangier history was the unwelcomed role thrust upon it in the War of 1812 when the British, after the declaration of war in 1814, "captured," occupied, and used it as a base of operations and training for their expedition against Baltimore. The Islanders, seventy-nine or so, became "prisoners of war." The quotation marks are meant to suggest that, though they had some restrictions, they were not imprisoned—a surprise, for the admiral in command, Admiral Sir George Cockburn, and his men had gained the reputation of wantonly ravishing other places in search of supplies.[20]

Before the occupation took place, Tangier had been for several years the gathering place for camp meetings at its beautifully wooded and sandy beach, which drew people from the surrounding Bay islands and mainland for religious services and revivals. The British landed at this beach and built on the camp meeting grounds. At first, they pitched their tents and confiscated the livestock and whatever else they needed. They then began to cut trees down from the groves of the camp meeting sites,[21] which had been established in 1808. At the reproof and entreatment of Joshua Thomas, later to be known as "The Parson of the Isles," Admiral Cockburn, impressed with the spirit of the man, spared the grove of trees and found others for permanent forts.[22]

From accounts that have been passed down for generations, the belief is that the British did not create much disorder or cause a lot of discomfort for the Islanders—astonishing, given that the nation was in a state of war and that Cockburn had not been known for such generosity.[23] One reported incident that tends to confirm the British treatment of the Islanders as benign was that the soldiers

would walk down the corn rows in single file to avoid damaging the corn. Since Admiral Cockburn had been directed by his superiors to land on Tangier, one wonders whether the British did not have strongly in mind that during the Revolution Tangier had been reported to have had Loyalists or Tories among their small number.

Tangier was set up by the British, as indicated previously, to be their center of operation for attacks all over the Bay, especially Baltimore and Washington. Upon their departure for Baltimore, Thomas had been asked to preach to the troops, a mass of about twelve thousand. With some fear and reluctance he did so. He admonished them to desist from their plans of attack for "it had come to him," a trade-mark phrase of his, that they would surely be defeated, which, as everyone knows, came to pass. The war came to an end in 1815. The Islanders survived the occupation with some discomfort but without material damages, as was true of all of the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

From this time onward, up to the second half of the century, the Islanders, like any other such communities, spent a good bit of their time struggling to make a living. Tangier, however, had an additional struggle; because of its ardent faith it was trying to establish a church. On September 13, 1821, it has been said that a great storm suddenly set in and swept over the whole island, with the ridges and some houses completely covered. The more religious, it is told, took the storm, which came to be known as the "September Gust," as a providential sign and intrusion in their lives to encourage greater devotion among those who "believed" and a warning to the unbelievers to get "right with their Lord." Notes in some church records mention the founding of a church in 1825 by a small group called "The Methodist Society." Just after the Civil War in 1866, cholera hit the Island, killing many people, with as many as six or more dying within a day. It seems that nearly all the people left but returned shortly after the cholera disappeared. Apart from these events, very little of importance, apparently, occurred during these years after the Revolutionary War and the start of the Civil War—except, that is, the flourishing of Methodism and the increased popularity of Joshua Thomas and the camp meetings, which will be considered at some length later.

It is hard to determine to what extent Tangier participated in the Civil War. In February 1861 a convention took place to consider the secession of Virginia from the Union:

> The delegates from Accomack and Northampton counties went to Richmond to the Convention which had been called to consider a refer-

> endum in which the people would decide whether to remain in the Union or secede and join the Confederate States of America. A referendum was for May 23, 1861, in which the people of Accomack and Northampton counties were to accept or reject the action of the Convention to join the Confederacy. Before the date arrived, federal ships had taken possession of the lower Chesapeake Bay. . . . Both counties, with the exception of Chincoteague precinct, voted to join the Confederacy.[24]

The eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia shortly thereafter were thoroughly occupied by Federal troops. Maryland had voted to stay in the Union; Virginia had voted to join the Confederacy. Many in the southern part of Maryland, however, had strong leanings toward the South, as did, of course, the people of Virginia's Eastern Shore. The Islanders in both states did not always agree with their mainland neighbors. In this case, however, Smith Islanders felt that the Union was the right choice. From the passage above, one would assume that Tangier voted with the rest of Accomack and Virginia—with the exception, of course, of Chincoteague—to join the Confederacy. Such an assumption may be wrong. Considering Tangier's reported well-known antislavery position, would it not be out of character for its residents to agree with Accomack? It is very easy, therefore, to believe that they did not vote, not as an abstention, but because they were not represented. This would not be hard to believe because even today the county of Accomack does not have Tangier as its "highest priority."

Not much is known about Tangier's role in the Civil War. Church sources only mention the years from 1861 to 1867 as the sole period it did not have a preacher. What is available, however, are two items that might be taken as "evidence" to suggest just what Tangier's position and participation were. One is a book of vignettes, *The Barcat Skipper*, told by a Tangier waterman born in 1903, and the other is a 1939 interpretation of informal church papers of two Tangier ministers of Swain Memorial Methodist Church, Charles W. Swain, born in 1859, and Hugh Kelso, born in 1876.

The Barcat Skipper consists of a number of tales told by Elmer Crockett to Larry S. Chowning, the author. Elmer Crockett, obviously an intelligent man, remembered clearly much of what he had personally experienced and the stories passed down by the older men of Tangier, who could reach back to the period of the Civil War. Two of the tales are about a certain Captain Harrison Crockett, a greatly admired man. The first reference is a mere comment about him: "He brought numerous families to the island during the

Civil War and helped them get a start."[25] The second is a tale about a family that lived near Fredericksburg, Virginia, on the Rappahannock, who hated slavery and were fearful of the encroaching war:

> Papa thought for awhile. "Rosanna, I know a place where the war will never come. Where we can live in peace until this war is over."
>
> "Is it in Virginia?" she asked.
>
> "Yes, it's an island in the Chesapeake Bay. I've passed by it many times in my old sailboat. It's called Tangier Island. I know a young fellow who lives there—Captain Harrison Crockett. I've docked beside him many times at the docks in Washington where we were selling our oysters and fish. There are right many people living there, and when the war is over, we can move back here."
>
> Rosanna's father got in touch with Captain Harrison Crockett, who took the family to Tangier, as he had others who were against the War and had lost their homes and some members of their families.[26]

From these, we can surmise that Tangier was isolated from the war and that it may have been a haven for others who feared the war, had been hurt by it, and wanted to escape from it. Some of these families, it seems, chose to remain on the Island after the war came to a close and were later joined by others.

Apart from the passages above, the only other views about Tangier's attitude about the war are those of Hall from his sociological study in the 1930s:

> The conflict between proslavery and antislavery factions finally proved to be a most devastating influence and broke up the long years of camp-meeting rule. Located almost on the division line between the North and the South, Tangier had nevertheless shown a tendency to ally itself with those churches which later formed the Northern Methodist Conferences. The attitude of the church in the region about Tangier [is that it] had been friendly toward Negroes. There is a record of four colored exhorters present at a Quarterly Conference in 1839. As the situation became more tense, the proslavery faction along the Western [mainland Virginia] and lower Eastern shores became antagonized by reports that the Tangier preachers were attacking the institution of slavery.[27]

This attack on slavery did not, of course, sit well with the slave-owning groups from the Eastern Shore and, especially, those from the Western Shore—because slaves were the foundation of the economy. The Northern Methodist Church, of which Tangier was a member, had made it clear that the "buying, selling, or holding of human beings as chattels was contrary to the laws of God."[28] Such a statement intensified the controversy and resulted in deep bitter-

ness and mob violence. Hall gives the Swain account of an angry mob from Guilford, on the mainland, threatening to come to Tangier for the "avowed purpose" of "breaking up the camp and killing the preacher against whom they had sworn vengeance for having declared to them that they had no right to make goods and chattels of human beings."[29]

The mobsters came as promised but did not carry out their threats. They did, however, create enough havoc and fear to discourage more meetings.

What, then, can be said about Tangier and the Civil War? It is clear that no real fighting took place there, that the church was under strain, and that the social dimension of their lives had some disruption. All in all, however, no more than the words of Hall can be said:

> Although the Tangier Islanders do not seem to have taken sides in the war, except to the extent that they condemned slavery, this limited partisanship alienated them from their fellow Virginians. The older people of Tangier, and the younger ones, too, . . . rarely talk about the Civil War, and then when they do, with no feeling. So far as can be determined, no Tangier Islander was a Union soldier. Swain speaks of an escaped slave fighting for the Union and living on Tangier later. He did not come until years after the war. One man who left the Island before the war is said to have become a Confederate soldier.[30]

Hall gathered from his interviews that Tangier Islanders "did not consider themselves Southerners." Whether this is true, I do not know, but it is difficult to challenge such a statement after over a half century. Today, as I think about it, I cannot remember any serious discussions about North-South issues and have never seen a rebel flag flown or displayed on the Island. The Islanders have as much contact with Marylanders as they do Virginians, and the only time they deride Marylanders is during seasons when Marylanders might impinge on "their fishing and crabbing grounds." My feeling, however, is that today the Islanders are Southern and would feel strange to be thought of as "Yankees."

In its early history, Tangier was, with the exception of the years of the camp meetings (1808–57), a community with little, if any, communication with other nearby islands and mainland towns. This worsened because of the Island's stance on slavery and the hostility of the war, which was one of the catalysts for shutting down the camp meetings. From then until the turn of the century, Tangier pretty much remained an isolated community. After 1900,

communication with the mainland began to improve, but slowly. This was true also among the nearby islands (Smith, Hollands, Watts, Foxes, and other smaller ones). Today, only Smith Island and Tangier remain inhabited. Despite their shared history, common concerns and pursuits, and proximity, not to mention some intermarriages, no strong bonds and communication have taken place. Inhabitants of the two islands are friendly when they run into each other, but still disputes can arise very quickly over crabbing regulations and boundaries. In short, during most of its history, Tangier has been an island unto itself and essentially aloof from its neighbors. John Neely Mears, editor of *The Eastern Shore News*, wrote in 1936:

> If this unique island were a thousand miles away, or in some foreign land, it would be talked about, written of and perhaps visited by tourists, but here it is almost at our door (Onancock), within two hundred miles from Philadelphia by automobile on Route 13, the shortest route from Maine to Florida, and comparatively few people have ever heard of the place.[31]

Around 1900, Tangier, with a population of over one thousand, was relatively free from major disturbances and had some moments of prosperity, which resulted in improvements in the livelihood of the people, not dramatic changes in lifestyle, but increasing comforts—nothing, however, comparable with those of the mainland. These changes were basically due to the appearance of the motorboat in 1907 (which became very common by 1915) and the earlier extension of the railroad to Crisfield, Maryland, about twelve miles northeast of Tangier. The motorboat made the Islanders' workaday lives easier and their harvesting of seafood more efficient. The railroad meant that the watermen could ship their catches by means other than boats to the more distant and richer markets to the north.

Though the motorboat changed the lives of the watermen, access to and departure from the Island was still difficult because of the shallow water and lack of a deepwater harbor. Until the years 1917–18, the watermen had no landing place of any consequence except the high marsh just north of Canton, one of the six ridges. At this time the government dredged the area around the Main Ridge, which not only created a harbor for the Island but also provided sand to build up the ridge and make room for more buildings. The harbor, about fifty feet wide, had a basin much larger and was positioned on the east side of the north end of the Main Ridge, opposite

Tangier Island Around 1900

"Map of Tangier Island Around 1900." Illustration: Deborah Miller

the church on King Street. Later, in 1922, the government again dredged the channel, widening it to sixty feet and enlarging the basin. This gave the channel a six-foot depth at low tide, and, with the addition of channel markers, large boats, both motorboats and sailboats, could come and go, on high or low tides, and at night as well as day. As a result, the Islanders became more prosperous, were more receptive and cordial to outsiders, and began to look across the Bay to the mainland and beyond.

Apart from the appearance of the motorboat and the extension of the railroad to the Eastern Shore, as previously mentioned, the greatest event in the development of Tangier was the invention of the crab pot. The railroad provided better access to the markets to the north, and the crab pot, greater facility in catching crabs. Until the railroads were built down to the lower end of the Eastern Shore in the 1880s, the sale of oysters, fish, and especially crabs was predominantly a local operation, even though sailing vessels had earlier taken oysters to the Baltimore market. The railroad created two great benefits for Tangier as well as for all the villages along the lower Shore. The first was the extension of a steamboat line from Crisfield to Norfolk to complete the railroad line from New York to Philadelphia to Norfolk. As a result, steamboat lines were developed all over the Bay. These boats stopped at Tangier at the so-called Steamboat Harbor pictured on some early maps as Cod Harbor on the south end of Tangier (the sandy beach). This harbor was little more than a wharf built out in the middle of the deeper water to allow the docking of larger boats. For many years the steamers loaded and unloaded people and freight that had been brought to the wharf in small boats from the shore.

The second and greatest benefit was, of course, the creation of a ready and greater market for crabs, especially soft crabs. Had it not been for the railroad and the availability of ice, the whole fishery would have remained somewhat of a casual operation. Crabbing would have been confined basically to the locality where the crabs were caught, fishing would not have developed, and oystering would have been dependent upon boats running to Baltimore. The availability of the railroad, however, would not have mattered much to the crabber if it had not been for the second greatest development, the invention of the crab pot, which as early as the 1960s became responsible for over two-thirds of the annual catch of the blue crab.

For much of its history, Tangier's inhabitants had been preoccupied with small-scale farming and cattle raising as a livelihood. As years passed, the larger acreages were broken down into town-size

lots to accommodate increases in population, and farming gave way to oystering and fishing around 1900 or thereabouts. From then on and through the thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties, oystering, fishing, and crabbing became complementary and seasonal activities for the same men throughout the year. Later on and until the present, all these activities were pursued, but disproportionately, with crabbing becoming the dominant source for subsistence. Later, in the late 1960s, another channel was dredged to permit entry from the Western Shore, and a small airport was built in the 1980s. In 1990, a breakwater was constructed to resist erosion.

Earlier, I mentioned that the Islanders, because of some prosperous years, began to look out toward the mainland and beyond. In the late sixties and early seventies, this was true, to be sure, but there was also a turnaround. The "mainland and beyond" began to look at Tangier and obviously found it a favorite trip for hordes of them—the result of which was the development of a new industry, that, upon retrospect, would have pleased John Neely Mears. Though outsiders or "strangers" had known something about the Island, it became "discovered" or "rediscovered" in "a big way," making tourism, if not an industry competing with the blue crab, at least a highly productive one. Why this happened as it did is hard to say. Some say that the Island's smallness and geographical isolation were to blame; others, its name; even others, the quaintness of the village and its people. It is hard to better William Warner's account, which is probably right and is certainly the most interesting and best expressed:

> But the islanders themselves have another answer for the tourist invasions. It's all because of the celebrated case of the Japanese doctor, they tell you. In 1954 Tangier's resident physician retired after thirty-seven years of service. The island was without medical care of any kind. *The New York Times*, which has had a long standing love affair with Tangier, ran various stories on the island's plight which were soon picked up by the wire services. After three years of such effort, a young Japanese intern, Dr. Mikio Kato of Kobe, was at last found. Dr. Kato, who spoke excellent English and liked to fish, was an instant hit. He worked hard, married one of Hilda Crockett's nieces, and stayed for four years, after which broader professional horizons beckoned. Tangier was again without a doctor. This time the islanders decided on a more dramatic approach. They invited a boatload of amateur radio operators from Richmond to come to the island and broadcast a continuous "CQ" or call to anyone listening. "The electronic and Elizabethan eras converged here this weekend as this tight little island broadcast a short wave appeal around the world for a doctor," the Times reported on this

> occasion with renewed excitement and sense of mission. These actions in turn led to the culminating event. A well-known television commentator [Douglas Edwards] took up the cause and invited a delegation of islanders to plead their case on a major national network. The facts that the appeal was not totally successful and that at this writing the island is once more looking for a doctor are not so important. What everyone remembers is that Alva Crockett and some of the boys got up their nerve, Blessed Jehovah, and spoke on television. "That's what put us on the map," the islanders say. "That's what started people coming here."[32]

They still do, by the hundreds, every day from late spring until early fall, from both the eastern and western shores and beyond.

Tangier Island, that once cluster of islands in the Chesapeake Bay Smith spoke of and admired, is today a small speck of land, relatively treeless, lying mid-bay southeast of the Potomac River and about fourteen miles east of Reedville, Virginia, on the Western Shore and twelve miles southwest of Crisfield, Maryland, on the Eastern Shore. The Island, ten miles directly south of Smith Island in Maryland, its closest neighbor, is a Virginia community attached historically and politically to Accomack County on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Until well into the twentieth century, it was somewhat isolated from the mainland. Though still isolated, it is not that re-

"Tangier Tour Boats." Photograph: Linda Nerine

mote today. However, it does stand apart as a place. The low-lying island, with its highest elevation at five feet at mean low tide, is a small mass of land of marshy ridges and shoals completely surrounded by water. Cutting through the 2 ¼ × 1 ¼ miles of ridges are narrow ditches and canals. The almost seven hundred residents are confined to about a half square mile along these ridges, separated by marsh and shallow waterways, or guts, as they call them. The Island has for a long time been subject to two major natural hazards, severe storms or hurricanes and steady shoreline erosion—which, until the constructing of the seawall—claimed about twenty to twenty-five feet a year of its western shore. Some have estimated that the Island in recent times has been sinking a half inch a year and have claimed that during Smith's time it must have been at least six to ten feet higher than it is now. A resident who has been watchful of the erosion during his adult years has often been quoted in the newspapers countrywide about how the Bay has been gnawing away at the western edge at an alarming rate. Since 1964, the west side lost seven to twelve feet a year until 1972, when it began to lose about thirty-two feet; in 1976, forty-three feet; and in 1989, thirty-one feet. The western and southern sides appear to have lost almost a mile of shoreline since the distant past, according to some of the residents, who have been told for years that swimmers and crabbers had noticed at low tides clusters of firmly fixed tree stumps about that far from shore. About mid-nineteenth century, stories of the camp meetings frequently mentioned "groves of trees." Today, not a stand can be found.

In February 1990 a seawall of riprap was constructed to block the force of winds and waves because they were close to endangering the airport and some homes. The seawall is fifty-seven hundred feet long, over a mile, fifty feet thick at its base, and six feet at the top. To hold back the Bay from the airport area, the seawall was raised eight feet higher than the rest of the stretch. To help defray the costs, which were handled chiefly by federal and state funds, the Islanders enthusiastically embraced a 400 percent tax increase, allowing them to contribute about $200,000 to the project. Even so, the earlier abandonment of former inhabited islands, both seaside and bayside, serve as constant reminders of what may be in store for them. Though fiercely independent men and women who have endured much—considering the position of the Island, the force of the tides, the ferocity of the northeasters and hurricanes, the pollution of the Bay taking place, the dwindling of resources, and the incessant sinking of the Island—they know that Tangier's future is precarious at best. No matter their efforts and tenacity, the Island-

"Canals and Bridges." Photographs: Donna Crockett

"Canal and Low-lying Land." Photograph: Donna Crockett

ers reflect some uneasiness and tacitly assume that they may be losing the battle or may have to face some future tidal calamity. Though not entirely sanguine about what is to come, they are hopeful, and, what is more, they strongly believe that they are the objects of providential care.

Before 1900, seven ridges stood sufficiently high and suitable to live on. All seven ridges, though low-lying, not very wide, and separated by marsh and waterways, were occupied. Until 1930, there were six, and from shortly thereafter until now, there have been only three: the Main Ridge, the West Ridge, and Canton. It is clear that Tangier currently is mostly marsh, mud, and sand, with three narrow ridges, altogether about a square mile, just high enough to build and live on. Of the three inhabited ridges, the largest is the Main Ridge, in the center of the Island, where most of the residents live and where the church, school, post office, and most of the stores are. In short, this is the hub ridge, the center of activity and interest, and where the significant social promenading takes place. This ridge is flanked from the west by the West Ridge, detached by the Big Gut Canal, and from the east, by Canton separated by Rubin's River.

The weatherboarded houses, generally small but of various sizes, are spaced tightly together and separated by fences. Apart from a

Tangier Island Today

"Map of Tangier Island Today." Illustration: Deborah Miller

trailer here and there, the houses are made of wood and, for the most part, painted white. They look crowded and cramped and probably are, but they are neat and, as a rule, tastefully done and spick-and-span. Almost all the houses have a small front yard, seasonally with flowers and grass, shrubs, and one or more trees. Most residents and some visitors fondly remember that years ago their yards were marked by white picket fences, which today, almost without exception, have been replaced by chain-link fences. Eyesore that they are, the residents apparently think they are necessary because of the introduction of motorized vehicles. With carts, scooters, motorcycles, and a few small cars and trucks scudding about, the residents found that the chain-link fences as borders could withstand the mishaps that frequently took place. King Street, the main street, running north-south, is about ten feet wide—with lanes, merely footpaths, branching off from it about three to five feet wide—just barely enough space to accommodate passing golf carts.

Since the 1930s, Tangier, because of the abandonment of the distant ridges, has become a more integrated community. Important here for community unity was the need for the Main Ridge and the satellite ridges, West Ridge and Canton, to have enough high ground for housing and establishing a center. Crucial also for its continuity and prosperity was a navigable harbor. With these accomplished, the north end of the Main Ridge became the hub of the town. Years later another channel, as noted earlier, was cut through the west side. With west and east entrances to the Island, access and "lives" were appreciably improved. Oyster Creek Ridge, Canaan, Cinnamon Ridge, Sheep's Hill, Ruben Town, and East Point now exist only in the memories of a few older residents.

From the year Joseph Crockett bought 450 acres of land on Tangier, 1778, surviving records, as already mentioned, are few and can be described at best as fragmentary, with the exception of some census and tax lists, which also have gaps. Yet, they can provide us with some interesting information on the formative years of Tangier history. Allow me to begin with the population from 1800 to 1930. For Tangier, the available data begin in 1800, showing that Tangier had a population of 79. No other figures are available until 1820, when the population was 74, consisting of 35 males and 38 females and one Black female. On July 18, 1805, a will of Joseph Crockett was made and later probated April 29, 1806, in Accomack. This will, according to Nora Miller Turman was "one of the earliest wills in which a bequest was made in United States dollars."[33] Here we find that of the 79 inhabitants of Tangier, 33 were Crocketts, all of

whom were descendants or daughters-in-law of Joseph Crockett. The other names appearing were Evans, Parks, Simpkins, Sparrow, and Thomas. It is worth noting here that from 1791 to 1801, only Crocketts and Thomases owned land on Tangier, not to mention that the average lot size was 625–675 acres, a matter that I will return to later.

No information is available for 1830 and 1840, but for 1850, just a few years before the outbreak of the Civil War and 72 years after Joseph Crockett's purchase, the population had increased to 178, with 86 males and 92 females. For the census year 1860, a rather significant date in United States history and one for Tangier also, the records show an increase to 411, six of whom were Black (3 males and 3 females). The other 405—White, of course—consisted of 196 males and 209 females. For the next decade, there was, apparently, not much in-migration, for the total population for 1870 showed an increase of only one—that is, to 412. The Black population had decreased by one male. The Whites numbered 407, with 209 males and 198 females. It is somewhat surprising, knowing Tangier's role during the Civil War, to find so little change in the population for this period for Tangier since it was a sort of a haven for those who detested the conflict. It may be that the mortality rate matched the in-migration rate.

No reliable figure is available for 1890, but from 1880 to 1900 the population almost doubled. For 1880, the last year showing Blacks as inhabitants, only one resident, the White population was 590—297 males and 292 females. For 1900 there were 1064 residents, an increase of 474 from 1880. The numbers for males and females were about even, 529 and 535 respectively. For 1910 and 1920, there must have been some confusion or change in record keeping, for the figures for 1910 were 698 and for 1920, 962, neither showing a breakdown for males and females. The population reached 1190, its peak, in 1930, with 577 males and 543 females.

Within the next decade, the period of the Depression, there was a significant drop of 14 percent, from 1190 to 1020 in 1940. During the World War II years until 1950, the number fell from 1020 to 915, another 10 percent. For the next ten years, the decrease slowed considerably, amounting to only 4 percent, from 915 to 876 in 1960. This was followed by a 7 percent decrease, 876 to 814, in 1970, then by 13 percent, from 814 to 711, in 1980; and by another 7 percent, 711 to 659, in 1990. Today the population is estimated to be fewer than 700.

Significant here, it seems, is that around the Civil War period and for sometime thereafter, Tangier must have had some attrac-

tion for mainlanders, the reasons for which are not clear, except that it apparently provided a refuge for some before the twentieth century broke. From the turn of the century, the Island obviously was appealing enough until the period of 1940–50, when people started to leave, not in great numbers, but in significant ones considering the small population. For exactly what reasons, it is hard to say. The best guess is that it was the same reason for which others leave small isolated towns—greater opportunities.

For a moment, let us return to the census years for 1860 and 1880. Of those 411 residents for 1860, only 39 were listed as born outside Virginia, 36 of whom were born in Maryland. For 1880, only 21 of the 590 residents were born outside Virginia. Of these 21, 16 were born in Maryland. From 1900 until the present it is perhaps safe to say that Tangier's population has consisted almost totally of only native Virginians, and only Tangier natives. So, it seems that, since its formative years, Tangier has been essentially, excluding some Marylanders and two or three others, a homogeneous community. This is important to keep in mind when the matter of dialect origins and relationship is taken up later.

For 1820, when the population was 74, 5 less than in 1800, there were listed 10 heads of households or families: Priscilla Crockett, John Crockett, Zachariah Crockett, Elisha Crockett, Henry Crockett, George Pruitt, Job Parks, Zarababel Paul, Whittington Shores, and Joshua Thomas. What is interesting here is that, from 1800 to 1820, the population changed very little, but the family names did. Gone are Evans, Simpkin, and Sparrow. Additions are Pruitt, Paul, and Shores. In 1800, as noted above, 33 of the 79 residents were Crocketts. In 1820, 50 of the 74 residents were Crocketts. Now, from 1860 to 1900, there was an appreciable increase in population and, as one would expect, an increase in the number of surnames. From church records of marriages, baptisms, and tombstone inscriptions, it can be seen that the following surnames go back at least to the 1880s and many far earlier than that: Brown, Baker, Benson, Bradshaw, Chambers, Charnock, Clark, Cooper, Corbitt, Crockett, Dales, Davis, Dize (Dies, Dise, Dives), Eskridge, Evans (Evins), Haynie, Kelly, Keyser, (Keaser), King, Laird, Landon, Marshall, McCready, Moore, Murphy, Newman, Payne, Raleigh, Rayfield, Parks, Pruitt, Shores, Spence, Stringle, Sturgeon, Thomas, Thorne, Townsend, Turlton, Wallace, Williams, and Wheatley. There may be a few others, but this is a relatively comprehensive list, if not exhaustive, as far as I can tell. For comparison with a list of current surnames, see page 225. Also for 1820, there was a mention of a fourteen-year-old slave girl, as one of the 74, whose

name was not listed. The presence of the slave girl, given the religious enthusiasm of the Islanders at this time, should prompt a question or two, unless, of course, she was a runaway and there for protection.

Following this look at population during the formative years of Tangier history, it may be instructive to consider the small inhabitable portion of the land among the ridges to see how it was divided up through the years ultimately into town-size lots. I will begin this consideration by returning to the earliest available records, the tax lists. From 1791 until the 1820s or so, real estate on Tangier was exclusively a concern of the Crocketts and Thomases, for no other families owned land there. In fact, for 1791 to 1801, the average lot size was around 625–675 acres. For the next 20 years, the average size lot was about 250 acres, all still owned by the Crocketts and Thomases, who, it should be remembered, made up half and more of the 74 to 79 residents of the Island. It took almost 30–40 years, to the census year 1861, for the average lot size to reach 32½ acres—that is, from 201½ acres in 1831, 85 acres in 1841, and back to 94 acres in 1851. After the end of the Civil War to 1871, the average lot size fell to two acres, at which time the population was 412. One would have to conclude that the Civil War conditions had something to do with this. Ten years later, in 1881, the average lot size fell again, to one acre. From that period until 1921, the average acreage fell by half to ¼ acre. Today, the average lot size has become much smaller because of the scarcity of habitable land and the further division of these small lots for offspring and their families.

In sum, then, it looks as if changes in lot size correspond exactly with the increases of population and have a nice fit with historical events, such as the Civil War, as the lots become smaller and smaller, ultimately becoming constant. Another way of saying this is that the town lot system was a part of Tangier many years ago. Such a system, given the smallness and proximity of things, plus community isolation, provides an opportunity for a community to become distinctive in a number of ways, as I shall later show.

As is obvious, Tangier has been a tight little community for years and today, perhaps even tighter since the population has fallen to fewer than 700. However, the fall in population as a factor may be offset by new developments, an appraisal of which will also be examined later. For now, attention will be paid again to the ridges. The habitable portions of the ridges vary in length from about 1400 feet to about 3500 feet and in width from about 225 feet to about 1000 feet. The three ridges are connected by paths and bridges,

which span the guts, ditches, or canals, run and cut through the marshes, and years ago—before the coming of motorized vehicles—provided the means for carrying fuel and supplies for residents from the main dock to their homes. Clearly, land is scarce and at a premium. A strong storm or tide can easily flood the ridges of the Island since it is only five feet above low mean water. As indicated earlier, the Main Ridge, where most of the people live, is the hub of Island activity, and the other ridges act like satellites. This configuration may have been the same many years before, when all the ridges were inhabited. Since 1990, the Main Ridge has always been the most populous, with the West Ridge and Canton following in order. The others (Canaan, Oyster Creek, East Point, and Tangier Point) decreased appreciably decade by decade and were completely abandoned by 1930.

Today, on the Main Ridge are located the important institutions and their housings: the main dock and all the crabbing businesses, the church, the school, the health services, the post office, and restaurants. Though small and uncomplicated, the Main Ridge is indeed the center of the social, business, and religious life on Tangier. Simply put, it is where things happen and where people of all ages desire to be. When the men return after crabbing and culling their catches for market and go home and get cleaned up, they return to the Main Ridge, to the docks and stores to talk about their catch, the market, and everything that touches their lives as watermen. Women, like the men, in late afternoon and early evening gather with friends up and down the Main Ridge to socialize. The younger people, boys and girls, find the Main Ridge the place to be. If there is any promenading going on, it is done here.

Canton, pronounced "Kenton" by the Islanders, lies just east of the Main Ridge, detached from it by Rubin's River Canal and connected by a path and a boardwalk, the only crossing. Today, only a few families live here. At an earlier time, up to thirty or so families lived on Canton. In the early days of Joshua Thomas, the legendary waterman-preacher, Canton had more residents than any other ridge. Today it is the most picturesque and most desirable ridge, perhaps because it does not have the commercialism and crowding of the Main Ridge. First settlement on Tangier was probably made here because it had higher ground and afforded some landing and access. Through most of the nineteenth century, many apparently thought that this was "the place" to live. People still have a "feeling" about Canton and continue to praise its virtues as having narrow and neat walkways, some tall trees and usually, in summer,

nice arrangements of plants and flowers, and, of course, being not as busy.

The West Ridge, which, until the construction of the seawall, was enduring annual erosion, has four crossings to or connections with the Main Ridge. The ridge is relatively long, but narrow, and has houses only on one side of the paved road. The other side is marsh. Years ago, even though storm tides covered the area, West Ridge had good soil, which had produced for generations good orchards, gardens, and even small farms. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the land was relatively prosperous and outsiders came to live, what had been large land parcels were broken up into small building lots, as they are today.

Oyster Creek Ridge, north of the West Ridge, at one time the home of eight to ten families, is no longer inhabited and has not been since the early 1930s. It takes its name from Oyster Creek Gut, which stretches from the harbor northwest through the Island. Anyone living there would have to wade across a long expanse of marsh and water. The ridge, until the early 1930s, was well populated and had good soil and a sandy beach. Though it is not visible today, the erosion of the land was not the cause of its abandonment. When the residents did move, they were in no danger of being washed away. They moved, not all at once, because they felt lonely, remote, and cut off from the hub of the Island, the Main Ridge.

Canaan, lying north of the other ridges and separated by Oyster Creek Gut and the dredged channel, has been uninhabited since 1928, except in season for hunting lodges. For years, Canaan was a village unit in itself. Prior to 1900, it had a store, a one-room school, and a Sunday school class. It had high land, good drinking water, fertile soil, good landing facilities, and excellent crabbing grounds nearby (where most of the crab scraping is done today)—reasons enough, one would think, for it to have become the dominant center of the Island. During this time, moreover, Canaan, with up to thirty to forty families, was relatively prosperous and connected by a roadway. Later, the small connector to the Main Ridge fell into disrepair, and Accomack County in 1905 refused to maintain it. In the same year, the large schoolhouse was built on the Main Ridge. Walking became increasingly difficult, and, soon after, children had to be taken to school in a boat. These conditions taken together, plus the difficulty it created for the doctor to make calls, began to make Canaan, like Oyster Creek, a remote area. At first, a few families moved down to the southern ridges. Then the store closed, causing others to leave, so that by 1928 Canaan was completely

abandoned. Samuel Warren Hall in the 1930s described the migration this way:

> The waters of the Chesapeake have encroached from this ridge and it is much as it was before the exodus. The departing people, however, took their houses with them, and hidden away deep among the trees and un-cared for flower gardens of this deserted ridge remain only four houses and parts of others. Former residents still own their land, pay taxes, and return for visits and quite recently, they have begun to call it the "Old Land of Canaan."[34]

From an interview in the fall of 1995 with Mrs. Annie Parks,[35] born on Tangier in 1900, I learned that Hall's account was accurate, that the houses were moved by barge or scow, and that many of those same houses are still lived in on the Main Ridge. Today, Canaan, now called Uppards, "Upper End," or "Up'ards," remains pretty much as Hall saw it in 1932, except for the four houses, which have been replaced by trailers used as hunting lodges.

East Point Ridge, now home of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and called "Port Isobel," is directly east of the Main Ridge and of the mailboat harbor, and northeast of Canton. It is small but has good high ground and would be a delightful place for a small neighborhood. Records show that before 1905 there were twelve houses, but the people, like those of Oyster Creek and Canaan, felt that they were outside of the daily activity and that, though only a short boat trip, rowing and sculling were too arduous a task, especially for the women and children, to get to the Main Ridge.

To the north and northeast of Canaan, the northernmost area of Tangier, lie a few small islands that were inhabited during the last half of the nineteenth century: Shankes (Shanks), Wheeler's Hole, Fishbone, Piney, and others with no generally accepted names. Southeast of Tangier lies Watts Island, also uninhabited. Shankes Island, about one and a half miles north of Tangier, is now, and has been for years, the most productive, and thus popular, crab-scraping ground. Around 1860, there were three houses on Shankes. A little later, the occupants moved to the Main Ridge. Wheeler's Hole Island—to some, Wheeler's Gap Island—was an opening for small-boat navigation through a line of islands and beaches from Canaan, northernmost portion of Tangier, to the southernmost section of Smith Island. Between 1860 and 1870, it had about fifteen to twenty houses on it. To the west and to the east lies shallow water, providing good crabbing grounds. Not much seems to be known about Wheeler's Hole, which has for years been washed away.

Some of the families had earlier moved to Tangier; whether all of them did is not known. Fishbone did at one time have a crab house on it, but Piney Island never had dwellings on it.

For most of its history, Tangier settlements were spread over a number of ridges and a few isolated islands nearby, known long ago as the Tangier Isles or Tangier Group. The group has gone; Tangier remains with six ridges. For a long time these six ridges were thought of as Tangier proper. Today, the people and their houses are concentrated on a main ridge and two adjacent ones, which are more or less thought of as less residential suburbs or satellites. According to Mrs. Annie Parks, the people who left the outlying ridges for the Main Ridge, the West Ridge, and Canton did not do so for fear of being washed away, though it was a concern. They did so because they felt "left out" and apart from the community.

PART II
People

3
Life and Family

WHEN ASKED, THOSE WHO HAVE VISITED TANGIER OFTEN HAVE A TENdency to respond pleasantly about how quaint Tangier is, but sometimes with gentle strictures about its apparent monotonous regularity and how paralyzingly dull life must be there. Perhaps these expressions of dissatisfaction would be somewhat tempered if Tangier as a place were more aesthetically pleasing to the eye. The truth is that today it is not as pretty as it was years ago and certainly not as striking as nearby Smith Island, but it would be cruel not to admit that it, all in all, has its charm.

With the coming of spring, tour boats from Crisfield, Reedville, and Onancock arrive daily with throngs of visitors—or "strangers," as Tangier people call them. Many of the visitors seem pleased with what they see but apparently amused and curious, maybe wondering how those who live there can stand it: no malls, no theaters, no hardware or specialty stores, no supermarkets, no department stores, no nightspots, and those tiny houses so close together! The Islanders are used to such musings and usually do not take offense. They merely do what their ancestors did: they go about their lives as if there is no other. They are abundantly aware that they are isolated in many respects from urban ways but clearly do not experience any throes of deprivation. They have no conflict with the march of technology and do not exclaim on a power impulse defiance of the rush and direction of social "progress." They are not vexed by the changing values of mainland communities. Nor are they envious of the greater creature comforts and status of the lives and worlds different from theirs. Except for Easter and Christmas, they have never made much over holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays. They are, at last, not a splinter group of people who stress and pursue separation from the world and are in conflict with modern American life in search of a theocratic community, as some think. Rather, they are a tight little village of fewer than 700 souls, whose lives are governed by narrow circumscriptions and are

surrounded by a massive body of water that in a sense defines what they do, who they are, and what they hope for.

The Islanders' desires are essentially the same as those of their mainland neighbors and of others not so nearby. Unlike some isolated communities—the Amish, for example—the Islanders, though physically isolated from the mobile and fashionable world, do not stubbornly insist on cultural purity or the "old ways," nor blindly resist change and totally reject the ways of more secular communities. Yet, they maintain a somewhat guarded way of life. They are a community with a biblical tradition. Worship, the Bible, and church are important in their lives. These are not, however, crushing weights that make the people hang their heads in gloom and despondency and slouch around as if smiles and laughter are a part of an ungodly world. They are not Puritans. It does not take long, however, to sense that they, church people and marginal church people alike, believe that the spiritual is pervasive and that they are secure in the knowledge that events on Tangier, in Tennyson's words, are "moved by an unseen hand," for better or worse. This has been the bedrock of their lives for generations. It is clearly that of early Wesleyan Methodism brought to the Island and nourished by Joshua Thomas, whose life was deeply influenced by the revival spirit of the first quarter of the nineteenth century on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Nonetheless, the people are not all gloom. They import something of their own feelings in their religious stance. They have a sense of humor, laugh a lot, joke and tease a lot, and enjoy life immensely.

As is well known, the community of Tangier is a place where the people are not from somewhere else, all white of English descent, bound together by history, ancestry, religion, and isolation. Tangier's boundaries are somewhat fixed in that there are seldom newcomers to the Island and few differences in the social status of the community. The census records show that in 1860 thirty-nine residents were born outside Virginia: one in England; thirty-six, Maryland; one, New York; and one, Washington, D.C. For 1880, the number of outsiders fell to twenty-one, with a drastic change only in those from Maryland, which fell to sixteen. For 1900, the census shows only fifteen of foreign or mixed parentage and only three foreign born. For 1930, the former had a decrease to eight, and the latter, to one. Since then newcomers have been rare, a family here and there. No Blacks have lived on Tangier since 1880, when the records show, as indicated earlier, only one. Certainly, there are differences in accumulated wealth and the quality and size of boats and houses, but few distinctions are made. They look wholesome

and self-assured and are not preoccupied with things of the world. In short, the quality of life here is not measured solely on economic terms.

Women are, as a rule, "stay-at-home people," attending to house, children, school, and church, watching television, thumbing through mail-order catalogs, talking by radio to their husbands on the Bay plying their trade, and periodically shopping at nearby mainland stores. The men, who are intimate with the sea, sun, and storm, earn their living "following the water": crabbing, oystering, and fishing. They spend their days away from home on their boats and their days away from their boats at home watching television or talking or playing dominoes in the evening at one of a number of stores, a favorite of which seems to be the Double Six Confectionery. The children, more often than not, still follow their parents: the girls are ready relatively early to become wives and mothers; the boys, at fourteen to sixteen, are ready and prepared to become watermen. The Islanders' lives are simple and hard, but they appear to be content, even happy. Like people everywhere, they have to confront economic, social, political, and philosophical problems. They experience, like others, joy but also disappointment and grief. There are rascals among them; generally, however, they are a good,

"Double Six: A Gathering Place for the Watermen." Photograph: Donna Crockett

friendly, hardworking, and fiercely patriotic lot. They are a people accustomed to searing-hot summers, icy-cold winters, and fearful and uncompromising winds and tides.

The Islanders are sensitive, even difficult, when it comes to stories about their old-fashioned or different ways, speech, and comments about what a quaint and picturesque lot they are. They surely do not like being gawked at. Anne Hughes Jander, along with her family, moved to Tangier in the early '40s and lived there until her husband died in the late '50s. Her memoir, *Crab's Hole: A Family Story of Tangier Island,* published by her son in 1994, has this to say about the matter:

> Journalists have reported tales of the clannishness of the Tangier people and have shown pictures of their homes and of their narrow streets, with certainly no intention of being unkind. Occasionally, however, items have been included that have seemed to the island folk to infer ridicule. The result has been a strong antagonism for all publicity, which is unfortunate, since the people have in their customs and manners here and in the strange beauty of their town, a unique way of life of which they can be rightly proud.[1]

For years, journalists and others, whatever the object of their stories, tended to comment about certain unappealing aspects of Tangier life, which the Islanders took to be cutting and censorious, as shown below:

> The island is unique in that it has practically no place in history. Once, in 1814, the British passed this spot on their way to their repulse at Baltimore, but nothing else has happened here of significance to any one but the islanders themselves in the limited orbit of their own lives. No one apparently has ever come out of the island to make a figure on a larger stage. If a people without history are a happy people then are these Tangier Islanders to be envied. And they live as if they thought they were. Alone, aloof and independent, they present a social situation unlike anything about them. A high percentage of its limited area is devoted to marshes. There are no farms, no large houses. . . .[2]

What follows may seem harmless, but it ends on a note journalists always highlight:

> On a spot to which the motor-car has not penetrated, to which even the horse has been a comparative stranger, and where the wheel-barrow and handcart have been the principal wheeled conveyances, it should not be surprising to find the principal street of the town is less than ten feet wide. It is lined on either side by low picket fences, and the little

> cottages sit back beyond a patch of yard. It is, however, a little surprising to find that these front yards are used by the islanders as their burying-grounds, so that when the families sit out before their doors to take the air and to enjoy the outlook, they observe life, that is the life of their village street, across the tombs of their ancestors.[3]

This tendency persists and accounts for much of the shyness or chilliness of manner some Islanders show in the presence of visitors.

The houses on Tangier come in all sizes. They are generally small and white, made of wood and covered with weatherboarding, but some have aluminum and vinyl siding. They are very close together, cramped even. The interior of the houses is relatively simple in decor, very tidy and clean, creating an atmosphere of quiet, comfort, and dignity. Running water and electricity, conveniences that mainlanders have taken for granted, came to Tangier within the past two or three generations. Electrification became a real part of Tangier life in 1947, though the church and a few other buildings had electricity as early as 1910, and most dwellings, by the 1930s, were furnished with it by a small power plant. Since 1977, the Island has been supplied electricity by an underwater cable from the mainland. Within recent years, more modern things have reached

"Proximity of Houses." Photograph: Donna Crockett

the Tangier homes: carpet, television, microwaves, telephones, and even some things "for show." Nearly every house has at least one television and a telephone, a source of consolation for those having emergencies and relatives living on the Shore. One big happy by-product of change was the sewage system laid down some twenty-five years ago, giving the Islanders relief from the odors of the dump site.

Tangier has, for some time now, been less of a world "unto itself." Many families have automobiles on the Shore and use them quite frequently. What is even more surprising is that Tangier has its own airstrip, which for the Islanders is a godsend when it gets iced-in and in other times of stress. No one on the Island owns a plane, but those who care to fly have access to mainland carriers to take them to various destinations. More than anything else, the airstrip serves for emergencies and visitors.

For years, life on Tangier remained pretty much intact because of the Island's isolation. The only regular means of communication with the outside was the mail boat, which still makes its daily runs. Boat trips to the mainland outside of those of watermen seeking markets were for special occasions or to see doctors and dentists. Some sixty years ago, the *Eastern Shore News* reported the following trips: Islanders to visit relatives, eight times; to visit friends, thirty-three times; visitors to relatives, thirty-two times; regarding school, thirty-six times; and for fish business, nine times.[4] Today, almost everyone has frequent contact with the mainland. A good estimate is that over half of the population makes more than fifteen trips each year, most of which are social, to such places as Baltimore, Salisbury, and Crisfield in Maryland and Onancock, Richmond, and Hampton Roads in Virginia.

There are some, mostly the elders who grew up eating by oil lamps, who have mixed feelings about the changes the Island has experienced in recent years. However, if the truth is to be told, few would say that the modern conveniences and changes have not brought a great deal of pleasure. What is even more, with regard to the Island's traditional hesitance to change, in response to Hurricane Gloria's threat to the Island in 1985, 88 percent of the households, at the request of the Commonwealth of Virginia, evacuated. Even though most of the residents left in their own boats,[5] this was a remarkable change from the attitude of the past when they refused to leave in the face of natural disasters. One may say, of course, that change in the face of a natural disaster, such as Gloria (described in the Norfolk press as the "hurricane of the century"), was only good sense and quite different from deliberate changes in

values and views or those as a result of absorption into a mass society. In the past, the Islanders have faced such potential disasters and not left. One must keep in mind that changes in traditional ways perceived by traditionally wrought and minded behavior can be equally as devastating as a natural disaster. In short, though not yet like "the people of San Francisco," the people of Tangier have undergone both material and attitudinal changes.

No group is more important and closer than the family, no matter the simplicity or complexity of the society. Family may even be of more importance in a small, isolated community like Tangier. This becomes more true when the society is conspicuously influenced by religion and where considerable interrelationship exists, as it does on Tangier, where only a few surnames make up more than half of the population. A counting of the tombstones shows about fifty or so surnames. Today, there are about thirty. Another significant factor is that its entire population is crowded on the three narrow ridges surrounded by marshland. The population peaked in the 1930s with just under 1200 inhabitants. Since these years a dwindling population has been consistent, as is obvious, but the decline has been somewhat gradual, with most of the people moving to and living on the mainland nearby—which means that most of the families have remained close together and not scattered about. Those who stay on Tangier are all neighbors in close proximity, almost within shouting distance of each other. I cite Anne Hughes Jander again:

> To write about our neighbors on Tangier would be, therefore, to write about everyone, for the most separated families are no more than a mile apart, and our lives are constantly touching those of the thousand or more other folk of the island. Still there are always some people whom we see oftener than others, either because of their proximity or because of some spiritual kinship between us.[6]

It is a neighborhood where friends and relatives call on each other. It is hard to be in a Tangier home for any length of time without a relative or neighbor dropping by, or when visiting another, to find family and friends sitting and talking. Generally, everyone comes through the back door without knocking. Doors are seldom, if ever, locked. Sometimes visitors may open the door and yell a greeting or name simultaneously to let the "visited" know of their presence. When Tangier men and women walk by the home of a friend or relative, it is rare that they do not stop or "give a call." This kind of interaction affords, of course, an excellent opportunity to pass on

"Tangier Families." Photographs: Linda Nerine

news. As charming as it may seem, however, it is also ripe soil for gossip, which indirectly operates in small communities as a form of censure. Tangier women like to be close to their neighbors, and men like to be close to their boats, the primary reason, as indicated earlier, for the evacuation of the earlier distant ridges and the concentration on the Main Ridge. Yet, if land is available on the two satellite ridges, Canton and West Ridge, there are some who would probably prefer those to avoid the constant scrutiny and discussion of or gossip about their affairs by neighbors and relatives alike.

Sometimes personal inhibitions or conscience will discourage gossip, which is thought by almost everyone everywhere as deceitfulness, even though most enjoy hearing and saying "juicy things" about somebody. Not many people on Tangier approve of such talk, but in addition to satisfying the tendency of some to meddle or to nose around, it also remains an effective form, as noted above, of social control. One may call this "small-town stuff." That it is. In a community where the population is related by blood and drawn together by ancestry, work, and worship, life is governed more by informal means than by formal dictates, confrontations, and stricture. The Islanders of all ages know that, if they commit some kind of indiscretion at home or on shore their neighbors and relatives will know about it in a short time. All in all, however, they more often than not look out for each other, especially in tough times. One person was fond of telling how a neighbor constantly was running him down, but when he got sick and had to go to the hospital, she was the first to send him a card with money enfolded. Such an act bears out the oft-spoken saying: "When one person is in trouble, we all are in trouble; when one person suffers, we all suffer." What is more, Tangier people are not, as a rule, well-off, but no one ever goes hungry and without shelter.

Almost all the Islanders are related in one way or another, or as one of them jokingly said, "We are all kin together." Since the early settlement, beginning with the Crocketts and Thomases, about two-thirds or more bore the names of Crockett, Thomas, Parks, Pruitt, and Dize. Among Tangier Islanders, there have been many cases of the marriage of second or more distant cousins, even of first cousins, but rarely. In such well-defined communities where intermarriage of cousins takes place, several recessive genetic disorders have been found to have high occurrence rates—for example, rare kinds of anemia, hemophilia, schizophrenia, and dwarfism. William Warner rightly admonishes visitors to be cautious in asking questions about this matter and observes:

> Since the 1950's Tangier has been besieged by medical research teams who swarm over the island, enthralled with the possibility of genetic isolation, with notebooks, cameras, blood sampling equipment. A National Institutes of Health study, for example, has discovered certain fatty tissue abnormalities among the islanders, now widely known in the medical literature as Tangier disease.[7]

Earlier sociological studies, such as that of two families with the fictitious names of Jukes and Kallikaks, each of whom had high counts of intermarriage, showed abnormal amounts of disease, criminality, and feeblemindedness. A concern with inbreeding is that recessive genes could ultimately match up on both sides of a family. With the inbreeding of normal marriages in such a close-knit community as Tangier, the likelihood of hereditary problems could possibly be a major concern. From conversations with the residents, I found that of all ages there may be three to five people with some sort of deficiency—or who are not "just right"—as they would say. Hall's sociological study of Tangier in the thirties noted that informants knew of only three such people. A report of county records from 1900 to 1928, he found, had only one person that was adjudged to be insane on the Island, and as far as he could tell, there was no widespread insanity or feeblemindedness on the Island then.[8] Furthermore, one would be hard put to it to find many acts of criminality.

Earlier, I described Tangier women as "stay-at-home" people, attending to house, home, school, and church. This should not be taken flat-out to mean that they were merely complements to their husbands and that they unquestioningly embrace the biblical standard found in I Corinthians (11:3): "the head of a woman is her husband." The responsibilities of women, to be sure, are the household and child rearing. Like anywhere else, the household on Tangier is thought or assumed to be the fundamental building block of a community. Without challenge, most would believe in the conventional image of a couple with children, with the wife cooking, keeping house, and bearing and rearing children and the husband providing the bulk of the income, if not all of it. Years ago family life on Tangier was probably austere and harsh. Familial affection and sentiment existed among these conditions, but economic survival then and still now tends to take precedence over other considerations, thus establishing the husband as "breadwinner" and making the family on the surface more patriarchal than matriarchal. This daily routine of family life is chiefly concerned with making a living, where men earn the money and women do the housework. This is

not to say that the authority of husband over wife is rigid; it merely establishes the man as head of the household. However, the rule and practice probably is that cooperation prevails where husband and wife share many responsibilities, undertakings, and decision making, with the former as provider and the latter as housekeeper and child rearer. Generally, what is expected of each other is somewhat tacitly assumed and acknowledged. Yet, as is well-known, because life can get messy, there are always exceptions where the balance gets out of proportion.

The husband, more often than not, is the keeper of the purse. Whether the old saying "the holder of the purse strings determines the course" prevails is relevant, I am not sure. Some women may have their own purses; of this, I am also not sure. Many times, however, I have been in earshot of wives saying, "Tom gave me money to go to the sale" or "He doesn't ever give her anything (money)." If women get money and spend it and need more, they probably will get it for the asking. Many women must, nevertheless, feel that they are like a child in an adult situation when it comes to money. My guess is that there is ample consideration here for each other, normally without rancor and without making an issue of authority and status.

Even though a division of labor exists, as indicated earlier, between "man's work" and "woman's work," some women do help the men with their work, packing and cleaning soft crabs and picking crabmeat, which is sold apart from the daily catches and market. The wife helps the husband with his work more than the husband helps the wife with hers. Although husbands do not consider wives' work shameful or degrading, you rarely see a husband "do the dishes or laundry" or "clean the house." What is more, the appearance of the yard appears to be up to the wife, who feels obligated to keep the outside as well as the inside of the house clean and neat.

Most women work at home; some, however, do part-time work outside the home in stores and restaurants, cleaning the houses of neighbors, and helping their husbands in the crab houses. In the 1919s a shirt factory was built and in 1931, a crab plant. Both employed women, but neither lasted very long. Later, other such business efforts were made, and they too only lasted a short time. The families enjoyed the additional cash, but, as the stories go, the men did not entirely approve of their wives working in the "factories." Whether the men's disapproval was directly due to their concern about their wives' additional, arduous tasks is hard to gauge. It may have been resentment or wounded pride in that having their wives

work prompted them to worry about what their neighbors would think or to question their self-worth as a provider. No doubt, some women have been a valuable complement to their husbands as breadwinners, but the minds of both, it is safe to say, are firmly fixed in the traditional division of provider and homemaker. Though this social pattern may be eroding because of the uncertainty of the water business, still few differences in the perception of this traditional arrangement exist.

One must not tacitly assume from what has been said that homemaking and child rearing are not enviable pursuits. Tangier women have no disdain for these roles; in fact, they cherish them, and besides, they are good at them. Neither must one conclude that Tangier women, because of the influence of the church and the Bible, bear the mark of Eve. They do not believe, when a man and woman are married (though the woman gives up her name and takes on the name of her husband) that she loses her name and self and thus becomes the property of the man and stands always at his bidding. What roles they play are not at the dictate of the church and the community. Custom here is strong, however, as it is everywhere, but the roles are prescribed fundamentally by the isolation of the Island and the scarcity of opportunities.

The women, like women everywhere, yearn for love and marriage, a home and children, a good life, and even professional attainments. Some have achieved all these pursuits, but in doing so, more often than not, they had to leave the Island. Those who fell in love with and married a Tangier waterman knew at once that some of their aspirations would have to give and never be realized. They did not have to mute their femaleness and individuality, but they knew that they had a shadow cast upon some of the desires they had. They made a turn from "the future" to "the now," from what might have been to what is. They knew, without cries of disappointment and dissatisfaction, that they had chosen a life living at the margin, which, of course, does not necessarily preclude a happy and rich life.

Much has been written about the harshness of making a living on the water, especially today. The harshness of this life does not escape the wives and mothers of Tangier. In fact, it may be even more burdensome on them, for they not only have to face the daunting challenge of the rush of day-to-day routine of home and family and the struggle of having enough money to get from one day to the next but also to contend with the trials and disappointments of their husbands and sons. What is more, the men seem at times so preoccupied with the ups and downs of their work and so

intent on a good catch that they appear occasionally "coarsened" and have little appreciation for what women do. No wonder, Tangier women are known to have admonished their daughters not to marry a waterman. These women can well appreciate the words of Roxanna Slade in the Reynolds Price novel of that name that being a wife and mother demand a combination of "a general, nurse, and saint."

To be sure, the lives of women, like those of men, are somewhat circumscribed on Tangier Island, but the range of women's activities are not confined to the spheres of hearth, home, and children. Apart from helping their husbands, some have established and managed businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, sandwich shops, gift shops, museums, bed-and-breakfast lodgings, and tourist services. The school is staffed almost completely by Tangier natives, most of whom are women. A few are nurses, who run the health center. Some even have "public" or "political" lives in that two of the five current council members are women.

It is no exaggeration to say that the women soak themselves into the life of the Island: home, school, church, and community. Many of the things that get done are through the efforts of women. If the home is functional and viable, it is generally the woman who made it so. Not so long ago, school was not a matter of great concern, with the result that only a few were able to read and write with confidence. For a long time, the traditional pattern, especially for the boys, was that they would stay in school up to the legal age and then drop out with little protest from the fathers, but, more often than not, against the wishes of the mothers. For many years now, graduation has seemed to be the desire of all, even among those who have decided to become watermen. Few would deny that such a change has been brought about chiefly by women who urged their children to stay in school and have done what they can to support school activities. Moreover, women are more vocal and active in church than they were years ago, when they usually, as the saying goes, "learned and worshipped in silence" and had little, if anything, to do with major decisions. The difference today is that women are visible and vocal in every aspect of church life, from teaching and leadership roles on special projects to the planning and administration of the church and its many activities.

Beyond what has been said, women have involved themselves in a major way with the important concerns of Tangier Island as a community of watermen and the problems facing them. Two instances will serve to show their contributions. It is not news to anyone that the watermen are under stress. The most recent issue that

threatened the watermen was the capping of new licenses for crabbing, which meant that the sons of watermen who had decided to work on the water would not be able to do so. The clamor of watermen fell on deaf ears until some women packed up their children and went to the capitol in Richmond to complain. Sometime after, a legislator drafted a bill to exclude Tangier watermen from the restriction. It was favorably received but eventually delayed because legislators from other regions wanted exceptions for their watermen as well.

Perhaps the most dramatic display of women's community efforts was their participation and leadership roles in the Tangier Watermen Community Stewardship 2020 Initiative Conference, a three-day meeting of watermen, church people, scientists, environmentalists, and state and federal representatives. Using biblical stewardship of creation as a basis, the participants discussed caring for creation, the watermen's culture, fishery stewardship, the vitality and future of the Bay, environmental concerns, and the future of Tangier Island's way of life. It was a remarkable event, with scientists, watermen, citizens, church people, and state and federal agents sharing ideas and views within a Christian context about the plight of the Bay and the economic well-being of the watermen. Prominent among the participants in all the meetings—and in the earlier planning stages—were the leadership roles of Tangier women, who suffered little in comparison with the more academic sort in their comments and views. An immediate by-product of their efforts was the organization of FAITH (Families Actively Involved in Improving Tangier's Heritage), a social action committee that has already made significant progress in the cleanup of the Island's streets, docks, canals, and harbors and the promotion of watermen's concerns.

Moreover, it would be a slight if I neglected to stress that Tangier women are really the ones who hold families together and carve out and improve their homes. It is the women who assume the responsibility for keeping in touch with relatives of both the extended families, no means a trivial job. It is also they who push to have things, not only those for show, to improve the quality of their lives and to make their lives more comfortable. Above all, they want their children to have better lives, to include education beyond high school. What is so conspicuous and remarkable about Tangier women is that they are "the laps and bosoms" for all the children of the Island, not just their own. It is a rare child that goes through the day without being spoken to, played with, patted on the head, or hugged by someone other than an immediate family member. The least re-

flective of Tangier children must feel a kind of security and comfort from the attention and love expressed by the women of the community.

Day by day, it is clear that Tangier women are enriching the community and are becoming vital for its sustenance. For all that they do and are increasingly called upon to do, they should be astonished at themselves. With things as they are, however, one must see that their roles are primarily, not exclusively, domestic, a conclusion that they would not find demeaning and cause them to recoil. There is not a cult of womanhood and domesticity, let me hasten to add, where the woman's fulfillment is tied solely to homemaking and child rearing. They are a community of lively women, some of whom still have private passions and others of whom are establishing themselves as highly capable people. They seem to know, for the most part, that whatever fulfillment they hope to have will occur in the home as a wife and mother, requiring, of course, a balance of heart, mind, and work. If the problems of the Bay mount and tourism grows, it is likely that new economic endeavors will materialize and thus obscure even more the pattern of men as "providers" and women as "homemakers."

The role of men is fundamentally to earn a living, which, of course, is derived from working on the water: crabbing and oystering, for the most part, but also clamming and fishing. Crabbing, however, is currently the prime fishery. The watermen typically get up early, around 3:30 A.M., walk or ride bikes, mopeds, or golf carts to the docks, get aboard their boats, and set out for the crabbing grounds near the Island. Around noon, give or take an hour or so, they return to the docks or crab houses and prepare their catch by culling it according to type and size. They then set the crabs aboard a specified boat that runs them to Crisfield for shipping, primarily to Baltimore and New York. Afterwards, they ready their rigs and gear for the next day.

Viewing the scene, onlookers may think it picturesque and quaint, but even they must realize that it is hard and backbreaking work. They also may see in it a well-practiced ritual bordering on a mind-deadening routine, perhaps a humdrum occupation. To be sure, the life of a waterman is not leisurely or always pleasant. Watermen would of course be the first to say so. Yet, no matter how hard and unmerciful it can be and how much they themselves complain, they would almost to a person have no other job. They periodically work at other jobs on the mainland, but, given the choice, they would prefer the "water" more than anything else. Though not obviously so, working on the water has its attraction.

"A Crabpotter." Photograph: Linda Nerine

They cherish the Chesapeake as a body of water and care passionately about who they are and what they do. The traditional skills of watermen, their knowledge and respect for the water, and hard work and thrift can be combined to make "a successful waterman" and a good life for him and his family. Be that as it may, there is a fragile side of this life: the unpredictability of winds and tides, so essential to their work, the cyclic ups and downs of their catch and market, and the overall destructive forces of nature that will do its work, no matter the efforts of humans. Watermen's first concern is to keep upright and afloat.

There is little or nothing here that will seize the imaginations of visitors to make them envious. Rather, they probably wonder why these people stay here and do what they do. Let me suggest why they stick to this place and why they follow the water. Tangier boys grow up with the water; it has been their playground, and water and boats have been the stuff of their lives and livelihood. A few do things other than work on the water; most, however, will "follow the water," because, as they say, "I've been growed up with it." By sixteen, even younger, they are ready for the water. It is their heritage. First, their fathers followed the water, their grandfathers did, and most of the people they know did. It is, in short, the rudimentary understanding and common belief that they should.

"Scrape Boats." Photographs: Donna Crockett

What appeals to them, moreover, is that on the water they are not "under anybody." They are their own bosses. One Islander put it this way: "The water is open to all. Sometimes the rewards are great, other times scanty, but always this active life brings excitement and usually the search brings satisfaction."[9] Every lick of oysters and every pull of the crab pot brought to the surface and dumped come hope, expectation, and joy, and sometimes, disappointment. The men experience this every day they are able to go out on the Bay to work. Today may be bad, but tomorrow may be better. This is what fascinates them and what allows them to muster what it takes to stick to it. A waterman fishing three hundred crab pots daily brings three hundred expectations of a full pot. Should they be disappointed three hundred times, they know that tomorrow may bring that number of moments of pleasure. What they cherish the most is a good catch. Some of those who yield to the uncertainty of this kind of life and seek a living elsewhere will sooner or later return. One such waterman expresses his return this way: "On the Shore, people hardly knew one another—and didn't much care. Here on the Island, now, we know each other and we all care. Guess that's why I decided to stay a Tangierman."[10] Tangier represents a lineage and succession of people whose lives have revolved around the water since the early nineteenth century.

"Crabhouses." Photograph: The author

"Young Entrepreneurs." Photograph: Linda Nerine

The sea, then, is truly what defines them; it is their prison at times, but altogether, it is their highway, farm, and life.

The children of Tangier, as a rule, are like children everywhere else, except perhaps more naive, innocent, and unspoiled by the things associated with the Shore or urban life. Nevertheless, we must not imagine that they do not cause their parents some anxious days and sleepless nights. Rather, we must guess that they have their temptations, curiosities, doubts, and moments of sauciness and rebellion. From a distance, they seem to be clean-cut youngsters, for the most part. In public, one rarely, if ever, hears a Tangier child swear, nor, for that matter, their parents, not even the men when they bunch up around the docks or gather in the evenings at the stores with no women or children around. In the world of thirty years ago, this would not be saying much, for in public swearing was considered boorish. Today, however, such language hardly draws comment or disapproving glances.

The children's behavior is not without explanation. First, they go to Sunday school and church. A more dissuading element, and perhaps the primary one, may be that the people in a very real sense are a big family, not necessarily a close or happy one, but a family just the same. So familiar a scene of Tangier daily life, as natural to them as walking and breathing, is a young mother, or relative, or

neighbor "toting" or "strollering" a child up and down King Street running into siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts, parents, grandparents, and neighbors all along the narrow street and having them make a great deal over the child. So later on in life if little Beth or Rob is found cutting up or saying "bad words," Uncle Andra, Aunt Ada, sister Loretta, cousin Pam, grandma Ida Bell, or grandpop Tom—not to mention more distant relatives, close friends, and neighbors—may possibly be in earshot and spot them and report them to mom and dad, Katie and Bob. Years ago, they would most certainly have gotten a "licking," at the least a verbal scolding. Both have a way of discouraging progress toward bad behavior and of encouraging thought about right and wrong. There was a time on Tangier when it was acceptable for adults "to lick" a neighbor's rowdy child, which meant the child was likely to get another "licking" at home. That they generally find themselves in the laps of their community is an unrealized assurance that they will be led toward a predictable socially acceptable life. As they grow, Tangier boys do boy things and Tangier girls, girl things. However, as Jander recalls with her characteristic vividness, for a boy Tangier is a paradise:

> Early spring finds them searching the island's dikes and paths for the wild asparagus which grows in abundance on Tangier. Going "spar

"Boats as Pleasure." Photograph: The author

grassing," the boys call it. When each small boy has his hands full of the tender stalks, he ties a piece of marsh grass about his bunch, and together the little group starts out to sell its harvest. . . . When the asparagus season is over the boys take to the water. . . . Almost any day when the weather is pleasant our small friends can be seen poling a little boat along one of the canals. . . . Sculling is a technique of propelling a boat using just one paddle and one hand. It looks simple enough; but it is an art which I defy any adult to imitate who was not brought up from childhood in a community of watermen. . . . All the island youngsters become expert swimmers. . . . Increasingly often they come for their daily swim in the deep swimming hole formed by the union of two canals near our cowbarn. . . . When the winter is hard on the island—which is not very common—and when ice forms on the canals, Tangier becomes a second Holland with boys and girls skating on the canals and in the harbor. . . . Then the boys take pleasure in jumping the canals. . . . This sport goes back to the earliest days on the island, for they still tell about one Tangierman who could jump the Big Gut at one of its narrower spots.[11]

The water remains the boy's playground until age thirteen or fourteen, when he becomes familiar with the more serious side of water life, the life of a waterman. He then does what his father does, and girls do what their mothers do: cooking, cleaning, watching younger children and running to the store. Because parents always seem to want their children to have better lives, it is not uncommon for both parents, but more so the mother, to admonish their sons—and daughters also—to be mindful of the less appealing aspects of following the water, not, however, in a demeaning fashion.

Courtship on Tangier is somewhat of a secretive affair. The place that provides the best opportunities for young people to get together for boy-girl relationships is the church. Outside church, there are few occasions where young people can get together socially, except, of course, the stores and streets. Decades ago, boys and girls were rarely seen together in public; if so, it would be walking King Street on the Main Ridge. The community center used to be a place for couples to get together, but it is used less today for social occasions. The usual age for dating is fourteen to sixteen; if a boy and girl become boyfriend and girlfriend, each may be slow to admit it. Perhaps the reticence here is due to the Tangier Islanders' fear of teasing by friends, family, and relatives. As long as they can, the youngsters tend to keep their fondness a secret. A public display of affection is not seen often, among neither the young nor the old. The young are shy in talking about boy/girl associations in the pres-

ence of adults. There have been indiscretions, but they are rare. Premarital relations would draw rebuke, though fundamentally through gossip, but the transgressors would not be shunned. If a girl becomes pregnant, the hope normally would be that the couple would get married. If not, the child would most certainly not be aborted, neither would it be treated as a bastard. An incident comes to mind. A young couple faced with pregnancy, though they had gone together for a long time, chose not to marry. The baby was born, the mother worked on the mainland but periodically returned, and the father stayed on the Island. The baby was cared for by both sets of "grandparents" and other relatives—and not in a grudging way. The baby was "made over" by both sides and even the whole community just like any other child.

Finding a mate within the Tangier community, with so few people—not to mention so few surnames—it goes without saying is difficult and means that cousins will at times date and marry cousins, usually though second or more distant ones, as indicated earlier. Once married, with the wedding having been a climatic experience and event for the families, both families will help the couple get established. Most frequently, they will at first live with one set of parents, more often with that of the bride. Stories from the Shore have been that Tangier couples or girls generally marry very young, about fourteen to sixteen. This is not so. It may be that those who have thought so have observed young girls frequently carrying babies in their arms or in strollers around the Island. In fact, more often than not, these girls may be "toting" their brothers or sisters or even infants of their cousins or neighbors.

Thus, we have a community that stands apart and, according to some, one that stands vulnerable and beleaguered and may become a relic of the past. The Islanders feel pressure, indeed, but talk about their demise, they feel, is merely talk. They love their life on Tangier and seem to believe that it will last forever. They are encouraged by the fact that most young people prefer staying home and that former Islanders, after years on shore, have a tradition of coming home.

4
Work

FROM SUNRISE TO SUNSET, THE TANGIER HARBOR IS ALIVE WITH A variety of boats scurrying about and animated voices ringing out above the sound of diesel engines, as the watermen leave for the Bay in anticipation of a good catch or gas-up and ready themselves for the next day. Apart from those who are involved in tourism or in the several shops and stores that serve the Island, about 90 percent of the men follow the water—traditionally meaning oystering, fishing, and crabbing, but presently, essentially only the last. Water, boats, and these endeavors tell the Tangier story more than anything else. They are the stuff of the Islanders' lives and livelihood and have been for many years, but not for three centuries, as journalists say when they feature the Island in their stories. Working the water as a primary occupation does not really go back much before the early 1800s, not even that far for fishing and crabbing.

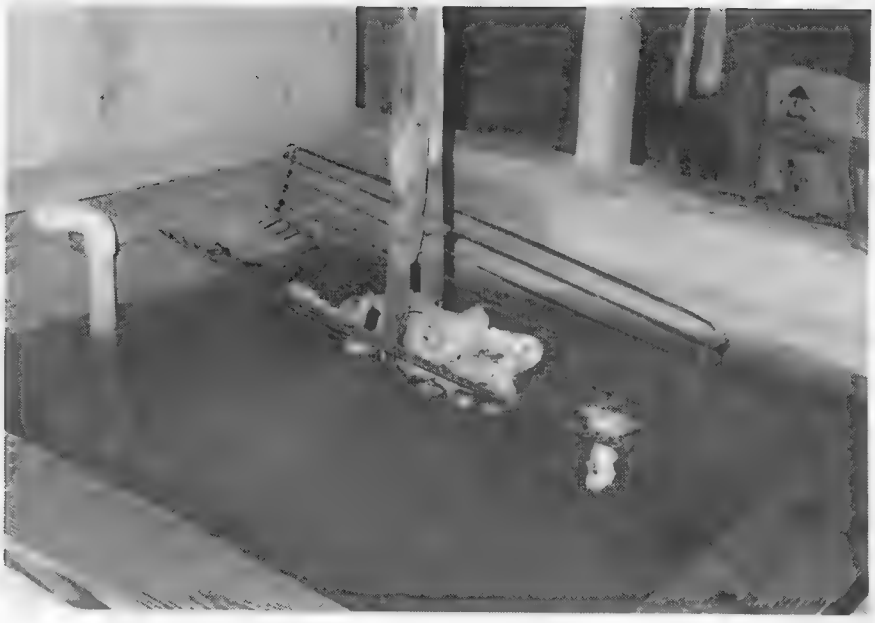
The beginnings of oystering, fishing, and crabbing started seriously with the advent of appropriately designed sailboats, then powerboats, transportation, and refrigeration. Before these changes took place, oystering, fishing, and crabbing remained essentially local and part-time activities. The late and slow development of these pursuits as commercial fisheries was obviously and basically due to the impossibility of delivering seafood in a timely manner to the markets and consumers while they were fresh. Today, that the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers are in bad shape is no secret. Oystering as it once was is now just about nonexistent. Fishing has declined appreciably, and crabbing—by far, the most vital fishery—is being threatened.

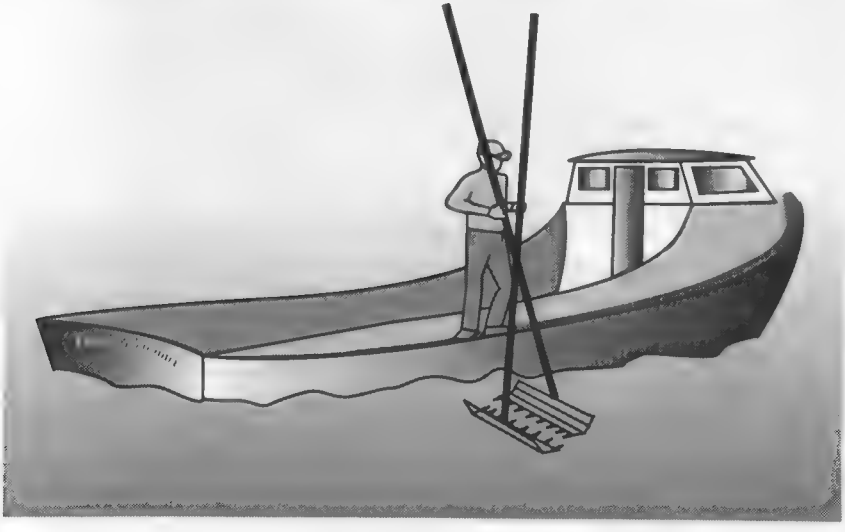
For generations, oystering, fishing, and crabbing were all carried on by the same men, usually with the same boat, but, of course, with different devices and techniques and during different seasons. Of the three, oystering as a primary occupation was the earliest. Oysters had been part of the diets of the colonists before and after Jamestown and probably were provided for them on these shores

"Tangier Docks." Photograph: The author

by someone raking them along shallow shorelines into heaps, primarily for local consumption. Sometime later, oyster tongs were devised and became a very effective means for catching oysters. Around the Bay, when one thinks about an oysterman, one usually has in mind a man standing on the washboards of a boat with tongs. In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, it was nothing for someone standing on the banks anywhere along the Bay to see hundreds of tongers working the oyster rocks with a dozen or more market boats, or buyboats, anchored nearby. Today, one would be hard put to it to find any at all.

Oystering as a big business began around 1800 in the Bay, when a new device called the dredge, or "drudge," as the waterman say, was introduced by New Englanders, who had earlier overfished and ruined many northern oyster beds and afterward sought the rich oyster "rocks" of the Bay in Maryland and Virginia. The dredge proved to be a highly efficient device for harvesting oysters, so efficient that its use almost destroyed the oyster grounds and industry as it had earlier done in the North. Once dredging was introduced, it was not long before oysters here and south of the Bay were under voracious attack, but also the whole enterprise produced acts and behaviors that smacked of the piracy of the eighteenth century along the waters of the Bay. Following Goode's 1879 survey *Fisher-*



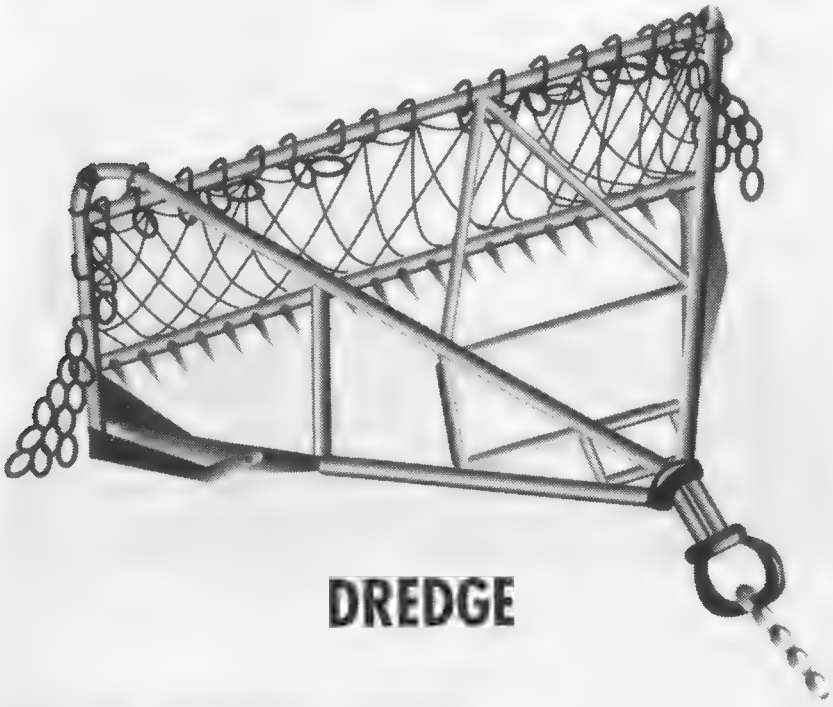


"Oyster Tongs." Photograph: The author; Illustration: Deborah Miller

ies and Fishery Industries of the United States, William Warner characterizes the onslaught:

> The chapters in Goode on the Virginia trade make sad reading. As many as 650,000 bushels of seed oysters were annually taken away by Cape Cod and Naragansett Bay schooners by the time of the Civil War. The original objective of building up northern beds with Chesapeake seed was seldom attained; the New England planters found their clients readily accepted half-grown stock and thus did not wait for the imported "oysterlings," as Goode quaintly called them, to go through the three or four years necessary to reach market size. Greater amounts of adult Bay oysters were of course also taken for quick embedding and local flavoring throughout the cool weather months. And, as these practices grew, the Chesapeake rapidly developed an oyster industry of its own. Resourceful watermen were not long content, needless to say, with loading down Yankee ships and letting them sail off to make the greater profits.[1]

The account goes on to say that, with both the northern and local fisheries (basically owned by New Englanders), 17,000,000 bushels



"The Dredge." Illustration: Deborah Miller

of oysters were being harvested annually. Warner emphasizes that the number of bushels taken then was five times more than now (in the 1970s) and he noted that by 1880 Goode and his associates had found 2,000 large dredging vessels and almost 7,000 sailing canoes plus other smaller boats on the Bay.[2] That the oyster beds came through this period says something about how remarkable the Bay was then; that it vigorously endured such attack for so long a time indicates its vitality.

From a distance, the "Chesapeake oyster boom" of these earlier years must have created a romantic and picturesque sight, with thousands of sailing vessels cutting and darting in every direction. The darker side of the grand view was, of course, the pillage and plunder of the fishery. An even darker side was the extent to which profit and greed had driven unscrupulous men who owned the fisheries to violate the "laws of God and humanity," in the words of one observer, Richard H. Edmonds, who was responsible for reporting on Maryland for Goode's survey.[3] One account of the conditions that drew shock and indignation by those familiar with them is the following:

> In the days of hand winders, dredging was hard and dangerous work; food and living conditions were poor; and since large crews were needed, it was difficult to man the vessels. Crimps soon became the chief suppliers of hands and as usual their methods of recruiting were none too scrupulous. Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York were full of immigrants, most of them ignorant of our ways and language, all looking for work. Promises of easy jobs, good food, and high pay brought dozens to the Bay. Once aboard the dredge boats, the men were hazed without mercy. The word quickly spread and crimps' promises brought no hands. Then shanghai methods, free drinks till drunk, knockout drops, and the blackjack, were used to get a crew, and no man was safe around the Baltimore waterfront after dark in the R-months. Afloat the "paddies" as all immigrants were called, were beaten with belaying pins, brass knuckles, and slung shot to keep them at work and murder was not infrequent. If a paddy stayed (willingly or unwillingly) with a dredger long enough to have wages due him after all the deducts for grub, clothing, boots, tobacco and cakes at exorbitant prices, he quite likely would be "paid off with the boom." That is, he would be ordered to some job on the cabin trunk, and the skipper would jibe the boom, knocking the paddy overboard, sometimes with a broken back.[4]

Blame for these conditions was placed squarely on the New England-owned plants in Baltimore and the owner-renters of the sailing vessels—who were one and the same in many cases. Around

1870, after the sanctioning of the dredge, laws were made to protect the interests of two groups of watermen of the Bay region: the dredgers and the tongers who had been put at a severe disadvantage. These groups had conflicting concerns, of course, and the laws created some serious problems for each. Eventually, however, with adequate law enforcement, the problems subsided, but they have never completely disappeared from the Bay.

For the Tangier Islanders, as well as for others, oystering with tongs typically began on the first of October and ended around the first of March. The usual arrangement would involve a boat of some thirty feet long, with three men, two tongers and a culler. The tongers would stand on the washboards, one on each side of the boat, and, after raking the oysters, would pull them to the surface and dump them on a culling board astride the hold of the boat, after which the culler would separate the legal-size oysters and throw them in a pile in the bottom of the boat and then throw the residue overboard.

If the Tangiermen oystered on public beds or "rocks," as they called them, near the Island, they would, as a rule, leave early in the morning and return late in the afternoon. If they oystered away from the Island—for instance, on the Potomac, James, or Rappahannock Rivers—they would stay away for several weeks and live on their boats in rather cramped quarters, where they slept and cooked. Should they tie up in a harbor where stores or movies were available, they would take advantage of them for entertainment; otherwise, they would spend their time on the boats, talk about their catches, and go to bed early. This routine away from home could go on for weeks, depending upon the availability of oysters and on the weather. As a rule, other than among themselves, they had very little social or cultural contact. During these periods, women had all responsibility for home and children. How well the oystermen did (amount of income) depended upon the weather, the catch (supply of oysters), and the daily market. Generally, from season to season, their incomes were somewhat consistent and, more often than not, would cover their expenses and make them a living. If frugal, they were even able "to put some money away."

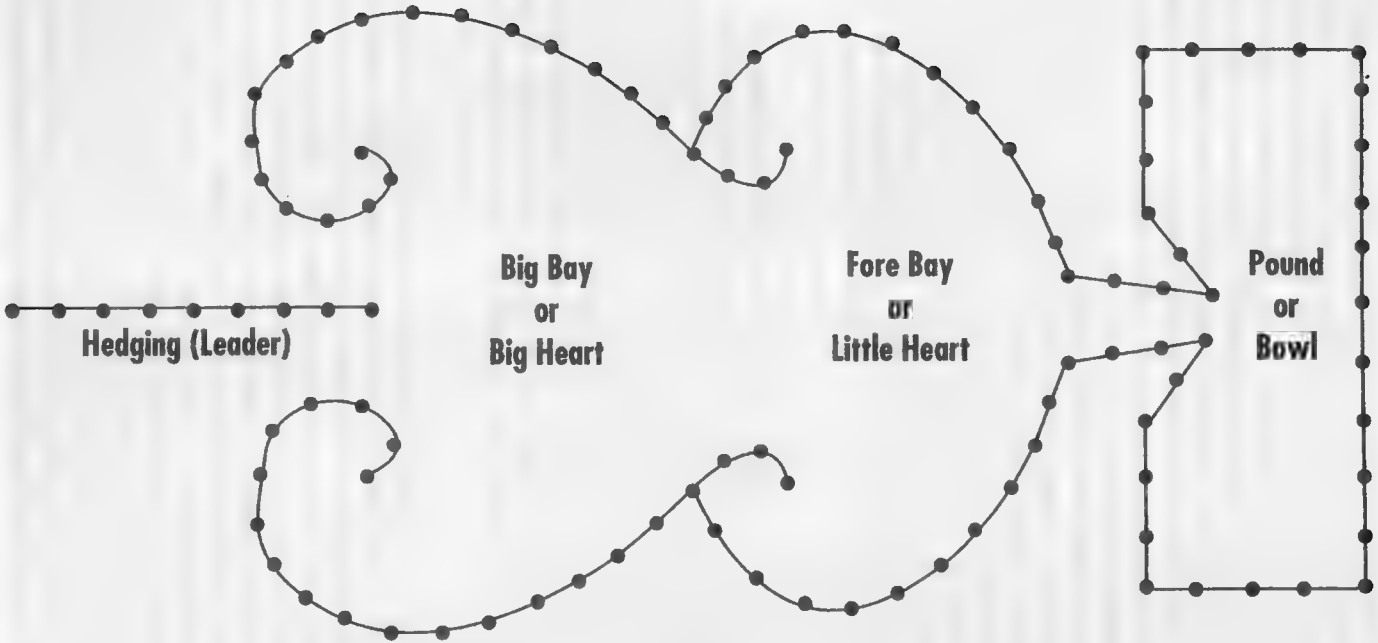
Fishing was of little importance before 1870, a year that marked the introduction of the pound net into Virginia waters by George Snediker of Long Island, New York, who had used it earlier, around 1855, at Sandy Hook, New Jersey. A few years before, it had been used in New England, and by 1870 its use spread rapidly to other regions.[5] The pound net was once visible almost everywhere along the shorelines of the Bay but is rarely seen today.

The origin of the pound net is obscure, but it doubtless came into being out of people's desire for seafood, not for sport. The design may have been derived from the English weir, a fence or enclosure in a stream for trapping fish, or from the Dutch fyke, a bag net for catching fish, since both terms are used in this country today. It is also possible that the colonists learned the craft from Native Americans and developed it into the design and shape that is used today, which incidentally has not changed a great deal since it was first used in commercial fishing.

Snediker's introduction of the pound net into Virginia waters is an interesting story. When he came to Virginia, he first located on the banks of the James River a few miles above its mouth, lived there for about three years, and later sold his equipment and returned to the North. In 1875, he came back to Virginia, at New Point Comfort in Matthews County, where he placed a pound net in the waters of Mobjack Bay. According to R. Edward Earll, in his 1877 history of the Spanish mackerel fishery, Snediker was faced with some prejudice:

> The fishermen of the neighborhood, being wholly unacquainted with the pound-net, were very jealous of the stranger that came among them with such a destructive apparatus. They watched Mr. Snediker's movements closely for several weeks, and, after seeing the enormous quantities of fish taken by him, at once informed him that he must take his "traps" and leave the county. Refusing to comply with their demands, a number of them sawed off the stakes of the pound even with the water and carried the netting to the shore, assuring Mr. Snediker that if he attempted to put it down again they would destroy it. Seeing it was useless to continue the fishery here, he decided to seek some more favorable locality.[6]

Before Snediker left, he sold his stakes to a local fisherman, who turned out to be more interested in the design of the pound than he was in the stakes. Shortly thereafter, this fisherman managed to make a pound and had it set up for fishing. This pound, like Snediker's, was also destroyed by other local fishermen. As they were pulling the nets apart, they too found out that it was able to catch fish very effectively. It was not long before twelve pounds were found in Mobjack Bay. Within eight to ten years later, the number of pounds had multiplied so much that eventually fishermen were arguing about available space to place them. In the Chesapeake Bay, before the pound net, fishing had been in the hands of farmers and others who were, for the most part, with hand lines and small seines, fishing for themselves and nearby neighbors hop-



Pound Net

"The Fish Pound." Illustration: Deborah Miller

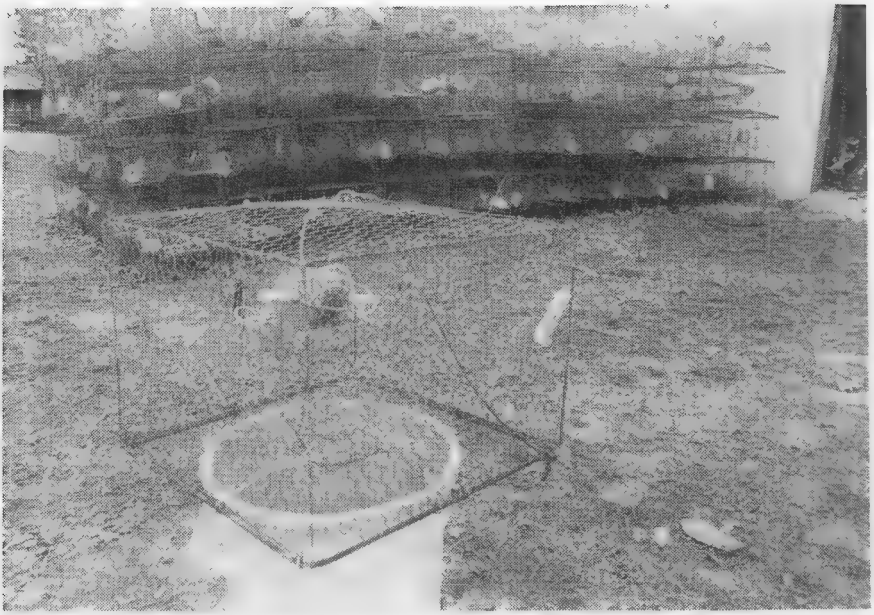
ing to get a "mess of fish" for dinner. Eventually, the pound net became the most important means for catching food fish in the Bay, though haul seines and set and gill nets were popular and somewhat productive.[7]

Fishing on Tangier was not a serious business until the men started using the pound net, or "trap," as they came to call it. Although pound net fishing is expensive, costing more than most watermen could muster, a number of Tangiermen were able to afford them and became "trappers." Trappers usually fish their nets once every twenty-four hours on slack low tides because currents at any other periods make fishing more difficult. Trapping can go on all year, but it usually is best in the fall and spring, with March, April, and May being the months of greatest activity. Fishing on Tangier today has been reduced to only a few pound nets, as it has among most Bay fishing communities, and it has fallen to "sport fishing" and gill netting—that is, for fun and nourishment and, at the most, for supplementary income. The only big fishery in recent years has been the menhaden industry, only important to Tangier because many Tangiermen have since the early years worked for the fishery at certain times of the year as crew members, pilots, and captains.

Crabbing developed slowly before 1900 and for a long time remained a casual and leisure-time activity. It was not until the 1930s that crabbing, with the invention of the crab pot, became an impressive industry. Since its patent by B. F. Lewis of Harryhogan, in the Northern Neck of Virginia in 1938, only a few improvements have been made. Though there are other effective ways of catching crabs, such as trotlines, scrapes, and traps—the crab pot is the most productive one today. Even though there had been consumer interest in crabs, especially soft crabs, the industry did not fully develop and expand until later because of the lack of appropriate refrigeration and transportation. A relevant reminiscence of the early conditions is caught by Larry Chowning in his *Barcat Skipper*:

> Refrigeration has played such an important part in the industry that there should be some mention of it. Mr. Crockett recalled, "Refrigeration was important to crabbing. Peelers and soft crabs weren't worth much before good refrigeration came along. People would go out in the harbor and catch all the crabs they wanted, but they were just used for bait and for eating around home. . . . There was very little ice around Tangier, but with the coming of electricity and refrigeration it gave the crabbing industry on the island and the Bay a great boost.[8]

In addition to refrigeration, transportation—specifically steamboats and railroads—became a part of the Chesapeake Bay region.



"The Crab Pot." Photograph: The author

Steamboats with stations and wharf facilities were spacious and substantial enough for freight and passengers; consequently, a system of boat lines was developed all over the Bay and up and down the many creeks and rivers. In 1884 a railroad was built on the Eastern Shore. With these developments came great opportunities, not only for travelers and the shipping of freight and crops, but also for the marketing of oysters, fish, and crabs. Nora Miller Turman in her *The Eastern Shore of Virginia* observed:

> The seafood industry was second only to sweet and Irish potatoes as source of income near the end of the nineteenth century. In addition to the edible seafoods, menhaden, locally called "old wives," were caught for the manufacture of oil and fertilizer. There were at least three fish factories on the Shore in the late 1800's. Oysters were sent to canning factories in the shell or opened and iced for market in northern cities. Clams, crabs, and some turtles were likewise marketed.[9]

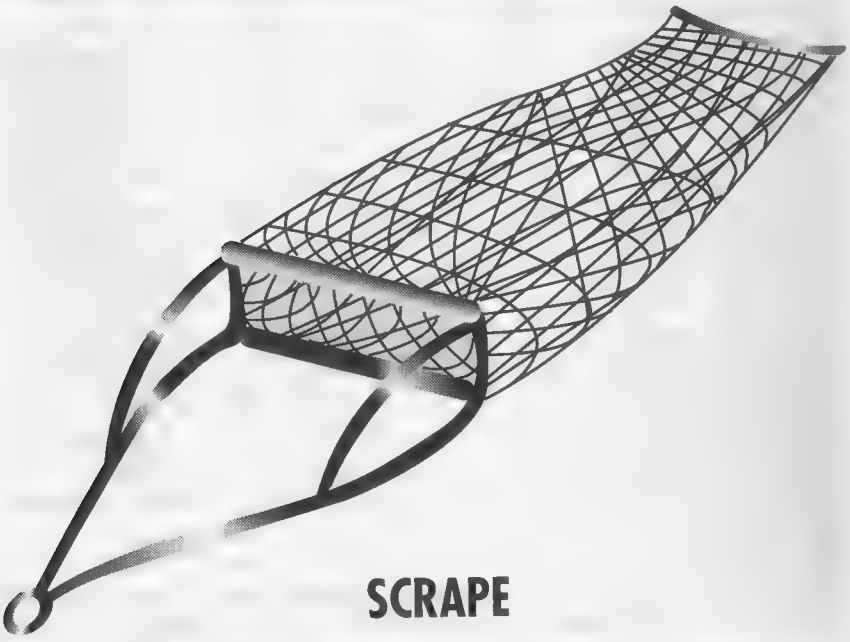
Prior to the use of the crab pot in the late 1930s, crabbers back to the 1870s used one of two suitable types of gear, not available at the same time: the trotline and the scrape. Neither of these, or taken together, produced an occupation of any great consequence. Perhaps it should be mentioned that some crabbers, especially

those from Tangier, practiced what they called "netting." This kind of crabbing could hardly support a community dependent on the water for a living. Yet, it was inexpensive to maintain and could provide food and some money for necessities.

The trotline and scrape, both relatively simple in technique and equipment, have been around since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The first is a means of catching hard crabs or "jimmies," whereas the scrape, which can scoop up anything in its path, is used basically for peelers and soft crabs. Until the early 1940s—that is, before the perfection of the crab pot—the trotline accounted for about two-thirds of the Bay catch of hard crabs. As the crab pot became more efficient, it gradually replaced trotlines. Scraping, developed also around the 1870s and a technique much like dredging, became increasingly important around 1900 and is today, along with the peeler pot (a variation of the crab pot), the most productive means of providing peelers for shedding. The scrape is structured like the oyster dredge except that it is much lighter and has a bag made entirely of twine and a drag bar without teeth.

Crabbing in the winter is exclusively dredging, which is done between November and April. It requires greater capital than any other means the watermen use to make a living on the Bay, fundamentally the reason so few engage in the endeavor. The dredge boat typically has a captain and three or four crew members, depending upon the size of the boat and the rigs used. The boats, normally from forty to sixty feet long and driven by diesels, tow two dredges at the same time. Some boats are smaller, have only one dredge, and carry a crew of only two or three. Since its inception, during the early 1940s and through its peak years, the winter dredge fleet landed about 10–30 percent of the Virginia hard-crab catch. Dredging for crabs takes place during their hibernation periods, when they bury themselves in the lower Bay about three to five inches deep in the sand or mud. The dredge used for this is more like the oyster dredge than the scrape but heavier in weight and larger in overall structure. The number of boats dredging hard crabs in the Bay today is down considerably from that of some forty years ago when there were hundreds.

As stated above, of oystering, fishing, and crabbing, it is the last today that typically provides the waterman with a livelihood. He usually starts crabbing in May and does not stop until the catches drop off, around October and November. His principal work is scraping or potting for peelers and soft crabs and crab potting for hard crabs. Once the catch has been made, the crabbers reach the



"The Crab Scrape." Photograph: The author; Illustration: Deborah Miller

"Shedding Floats." Photograph: Linda Nerine

"Shedding Floats." Photograph: Linda Nerine

market by supplying or selling peelers and soft crabs to crab packers and hard crabs to crab-picking plants for market preparation for a variety of customers, most frequently for those in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. The crabs usually go within twenty-four hours from the Bay to the kitchen. On Tangier, the crabber who used to catch the crabs and send them to crab houses has simplified the marketing process. He not only catches the crabs but also sheds them in his own crab house and packs them himself for wider distribution—thus becoming a small, one-man operation and business. The crab potter's process is simpler; he merely dumps his hard crabs into barrels and sells them directly to crab-picking plants for steaming and the packing of the crabmeat. Through the years, Tangiermen have caught and marketed more crabs than any other community in the Chesapeake Bay. It still remains their basic industry.

It is difficult for anyone to walk along the docks of a fishing village like Tangier and not be drawn to find out more about what is going on inside its innermost workings. To some, it looks dreadful, dirty, and dull. To others, living and working on the water presents scenes that are quaintly attractive and charming; some may even become envious of a life that they construe as simple and serene. The variety and gear of the boats alone are enough to catch the

attention of some visitors. Those who help form this picturesqueness, though they appreciate the vibrancy of the life they live, are quick to chuckle about the sunny assumptions of these onlookers and to fasten their own minds impulsively and instinctively on their concerns of existence, sustenance, and survival. All watermen lead precarious lives because what they do for a living requires a partnership with the forces of nature—the sun, the winds, the tides, the storms, and the clock—all of which make unruly partners. Because of these, the watermen may not see all the natural charm and striking scenes of rustic and nautical life that so appeal to the typical visitor. They, of course, enjoy much of what they do and would, in fact, do nothing else. This is obvious. Yet, what may not be so clear and appreciated by onlookers is that their lives are constantly harried by the uncertainty and fluctuations of the catch and the market, not to mention the increasing expenses of this endeavor. They can manage these, as their history shows, but today they have other frustrations that threaten their livelihood, dominate their waking hours, and provoke their characteristic reaction to see matters in sharp contrasts, which has both benefits and liabilities, as we shall see in the following pages.

What is troubling the watermen the most today is declining catches, the complete shutdown of some fisheries, moratoriums on others, strident cries of environmental activists and recreational boaters, and stringent governmental regulations, the intent of which, they firmly believe, is to "get every last waterman off the Bay" in favor of the recreational and environmental sort. What bemuses them and challenges their already tested equanimity is how detached and nonchalant activists and regulating commissions appear to be in pursuit of their objectives about the Island's economic mainstay and its survival, many of whom think the Islanders have no capacity or will for change and are likely to stay deaf to the cries of the environmentalists. They too think they are a part of the ecosystem, though not, they are willing to admit, with the environmental set of mind of those who would be regulating them out of a livelihood. Their questions and concerns are like those of all other people who derive their living from the land or sea and are facing a precarious future: how are we supposed to live and what can we do? What bothers them is the apparent lack of concern for their futures and the seemingly never-ending turns of mind of those agents who wish to regulate. They embrace views that the watermen are convinced are contrived not to answer their concerns. What the watermen hear is that overharvesting has decimated the fisheries of the Bay. Because the regulators dismiss the cyclic na-

"The Attitude Toward the Chesapeake Bay Foundation." Photograph: The author

ture of crabs, fish, and oysters and widespread pollution as equal causes for the decline, watermen rail at them and consider them noncaring and even heartless, though some among them, if pressed, will admit that their stubborn resistance to change is not without flaw and that they do bear some responsibility for the condition of the Bay. The watermen know that the Bay, once a source of boundless natural abundance, has dwindling resources and that they have to work twice as hard to maintain their catches, which are meager compared with those of a few decades ago. They wonder, nevertheless, whether their intransigence is any more than that of lumbermen, builders, developers, and corporations when they are faced with environmental demands. The watermen wince, thinking that there may be one glaring variable—which, of course, smacks of money, a lot of it in the case of the stronger sort, those just mentioned, and very little of it in case of the lesser sort, the struggling watermen. With the former, the concern is position and profit; with the latter, livelihood. The phalanx of state and environmental agencies in somewhat of a conciliatory and unctuous fashion tends to belittle the views of watermen and to characterize them as with faces disfigured by their passion to catch everything in the Bay and to intimate that they are excessively obsessed with

the socioeconomic drama of their own lives. The watermen, perhaps because of their own lack of diplomatic adroitness, sense that the regulators believe that their defensive or hedging reactions are too melodramatic and not appropriately concerned with the health of the Bay. It is probably fair to say, in listening to the watermen's defense of their position and their disdain for regulation, that they are resentful and not enthusiastic conservationists and have little or no regard for the future. Yet it would take a hard mind not to have empathy for their plight and to agree that they have been jerked around, have been dealt with in a patronizing way, and are the victims of conflicting and confusing solutions. Watermen, like other isolated groups, have a tendency—much to the chagrin of environmentalists and regulating agencies—to think, because of their isolation, their dependence on the Bay, and their heritage, that they have an inherent and unchallengeable right to the resources of the Bay. Consider the following four citations:

> "Mr. Manning, there is something you don't understand," the young waterman said. "These here communities on the shore, our little town here on the island and over to the mainland, was all founded on the right of free plunder. If you follow the water, that's how it was and that's how it's got to be."[10]

> Yes, those are the scrapes and, you know, they're illegal. . . . State has changed the laws. I have four-foot scrapes; now they're not supposed to be more'n three feet wide. Not even supposed to carry a third scrape aboard, like I got. They don't trust us. But I won't change. Give you a twenty dollar ticket, but I won't change. . . . Telling us how to crab," he snorted.[11]

> Increasingly, therefore, watermen throughout the Bay became a devout, temperate and law-abiding people. Outsiders, however, noted one glaring contradiction. The watermen treated anything that floated, swam, crawled, or flew into their marshy domains as God-given and therefore not subject to the laws of mortal men. What the Lord provided, no landsman should tell them how to harvest. This view, we shall see, persists.[12]

> [He] told the judge that his father and grandfather had been duck hunters, and he grew up with their example. "Even though I have two degrees and I know better, you see certain things, and they're part of your lifestyle," he said. "This is the first time I've been in trouble with the law."[13]

Those who want to fix the Bay are apt to be repelled by such attitudes and break into smiles and stares of disbelief and often reac-

tions of disgust, dismissing such attitudes as the reasons for the plight of the Bay. Without a doubt, these attitudes are shortsighted, self-serving, and even appalling, and they lack discernment in planning for the ages to come. Back of these mind-sets, however, is a story of possible tragic consequence. It is not only a matter of fish, oysters, and crabs and the Bay; it is also one of communities and people whose lives and history have been molded and determined by the Bay and its resources, which are now facing an end. Although it may sound melodramatic, the people are scared to death. That is not all—they feel victimized. They are convinced that the environmentalists and commissions, especially in Virginia, do not care about their plight and do not listen to them.

With the best of conditions, watermen tend to live on the edge. They are aware of the diminished resources of the Bay and the almost complete collapse of oystering. Even so, they are not about to accept strict and, to them, "unreasonable" constraints because the loud and strident cry of "overfishing" does not, they say, speak to all the problems and even consider the cyclic nature of the catches of oysters, fish, and crabs. Watermen for generations, during their lives and in the memories of their ancestors, know and have known about "good years and bad years," which they think have little to do with overfishing.

It is amusing how earnestly we are taught to have some appreciation for other cultures and societies, their habits, codes, and mores, and yet not even glimpse those of groups in our own backyard. In short, in the words of Justice Louis D. Brandeis, they feel, perhaps unrealistically, that they "ought to have the right to be let alone." To suggest that they are guilty of destructive habits is to misunderstand their avowed "right of plunder," which some doubtless lay claim to as their birthright. They are not, it is well-known, zestfully enthusiastic about conservation, but to accuse them alone of abject waste and destruction is somewhat unfair, especially so, when they learn of incidents such as that of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's getting caught dredging oysters (without a permit) in Tangier Sound (closed to watermen) for a party. Is it any wonder that the watermen have a jaundiced view of environmentalists, who usually lord it over them? They will catch what they can. Who would not, given the unpredictability of the weather and catch and increasing threats of regulation. What is happening to the Bay is sad, but what is happening to the watermen is also sad.

The three citations below point to other causes of frustration:

> Now, we can't get new licenses. My son's out of school and wants to follow the water. He's married and he can't work with me. I don't make enough to carry two families.[14]

"I may not know as much about how long a crab lives or what diseases oysters get as the scientists and government men," he said as he piloted his boat through the morning fog with only the horn from an invisible beacon to guide him, "but I do know how a man makes a living on the water. And I know it isn't right to tell a man he can't work."[15]

It's hard to understand the State. They hired a man from out West with no knowledge of the Bay to reclaim the Bay fisheries. There are only five oystermen tonging and thirty inspectors to watch them.[16]

Watermen would like to be more deeply involved in decision making or, failing that, to be recognized as an important element in the enterprise the regulators are trying to fix. Having this desire fulfilled, they despair, proves for them a torturous road. The capping of the number of licenses to be issued, another sore spot, seems to them to be unreasonable. They think about sons of watermen who have been preparing with their fathers to become watermen and wonder about what they are going to do. If licenses need to be capped, why not look, they suggest, to the hundreds of part-time crabbers and backyard shedders retired from other jobs, who make hundreds of thousand of dollars as supplementary income?

There are additional complaints. A recent season was just about wiped out by bad weather. The watermen made an earnest appeal for an extension, but were flatly turned down even though the extension would not have gone beyond the specified number of actual working days. Is it unreasonable for watermen, already victims of shortened seasons, to expect an extension of a season when foul weather wipes out a week or two? If there are reasons for not doing so, could they not be shared with the watermen? And there is even more. They constantly complain about many of the people the Commonwealth places in jobs and on commissions who police them and create the regulations that affect their lives. In addition to the incident above, they were somewhat put out that the governor recently replaced a member of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) with a college professor who knew nothing about the Bay and watermen. It is no matter that their bones ache and minds burn.

There is hardly an environmental and economic disaster more worthy and demanding of attention for the Chesapeake Bay community than its seafood industry. The VMRC, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), and the watermen, for example, generally agree on the health of the Bay, but obviously not on the needs of the Bay and the watermen's responsibility. Years of discussion, or quarreling, among the watermen, merchants, environmental

groups, and federal and state agencies, and commissions are well known. The watermen feel that the others (though VRMC has been criticized for being too cozy with the watermen) are distant from their lives and from those who are facing the loss of a meaningful way of life and that these agencies, therefore, have little appreciation for their concerns and frustration.

It is not difficult to gauge the watermen's dissatisfaction with the "solutions" these groups have for the Bay, for they are aimed directly at the watermen. I marvel at a writer of a handout at a recent VMRC meeting who reminded the commission members that VMRC is not a social welfare agency and need not get involved in the social and economic needs of the watermen. So, along with the weather and the fluctuations of their catches, they curse the commissions, environmentalists, and other agencies and their "knowledge," not always presented with clinical detachment and often couched in words that do not make much sense to them, not because they do not have the patience for wandering convoluted language that even the dullest of them find conflicting. They become particularly resentful when these groups either ignore or balk at their special knowledge—that is, lifetimes of following the water. They are keenly aware that their knowledge is not as pretentious as that of the agency personnel, but as unpretentious as it is, it is, they think, worth attention. They would like to remind everyone that practicality drives the watermen's life, not politics and ideology. Their stance is that book sense and science are fine, but that the stampede toward regulatory reform could stand an injection of common sense. What the watermen constantly hear is the one voice exclaiming that the depletion of the stocks of the Bay is due to overfishing: overfishing, mind you, not toxic sediments and pollution, not hog waste and poultry droppings, not water temperature changes, not ballast water with varieties of organisms dumped into the Bay by thousands of ships from all over the world, not the failure of the Commonwealth to require earlier oyster shuckers to return the shells to the oyster grounds, not excessively wet and dry seasons, not crabs becoming increasingly the prey of fish, and surely not the natural cycles of oysters, fish, and crabs.

What really troubles the watermen are the discordant and conflicting voices of those with all the pretentious knowledge:

> —His theory that there is no evidence that commercial fishing has long-term effects on crab stocks.
>
> —His push in 1958 to allow fishermen to take any adult female blue crab regardless of size. "The previous law said a female crab had to be

more than 5 inches to take. The concern of protecting the species was admirable but what we didn't know was that many mature females don't reach that size. So we were actually increasing stocks more than necessary."

—The philosophy "to fish the Bay and fish it hard."

—His fierce defense of winter dredging[17]

A new federal study (NOAA) concludes that the Chesapeake Bay blue crab is not being overfished and that recent declines in its population are part of a natural cycle.[18]

A Virginia scientist assails federal crab study. A leading scientist of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) . . . criticized a federal study (NOAA) Monday that concludes a recent decline in Chesapeake blue crabs is just another blip with no link to overfishing.[19]

How can they take seriously and confidently the recommendations of those who want to regulate them, they pause to reflect, when they hear only a confusion of voices, those of VIMS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and VRMC, all of which they tend to lump together as "they," even though VRMC is somewhat appreciative of their situation, and NOAA has reported, as seen above, findings somewhat in agreement with their views? The prevailing view, however, is that overfishing is the reason for the collapse of some fisheries and a decline in others, which, of course, beams down directly on the watermen.

Willard Van Engel, a widely acclaimed VIMS crab scientist, upon his retirement some years ago(in 1985), made it crystal clear (first citation above) that he did not believe that overfishing was the cause for the fisheries' problems. Since then, different positions have been taken, resulting in a push for regulation, which has not proceeded in a graceful and admirable way. NOAA in 1996 announced near the completion of a study they had been concluding that, though "long-term protection" is needed, the "Chesapeake Bay blue crab is not being overfished." A response from a VIMS scientist was quick and sharp: the NOAA study is "flawed" and "promotes a false optimism." NOAA released its study in the spring of 1997. Described as "one of the most comprehensive studies of the Chesapeake Bay blue crab," it turned out to be good news for the watermen, for the nine-year study unequivocally concluded that there was "no evidence of overfishing" and noted "a record increase last year in the number of young crabs in the lower Bay in Hampton Roads," the chief spawning grounds of the crabs. In sum, no remarkable declines apart from the natural cycle, which sounds close to the watermen's "good years and bad years." In an interview

January 30, 1999, Van Engel told me that since his earlier statements things had changed a great deal. He makes it very clear that today we must be vigilant and require some regulation. He also stresses that there are many facts and factors that must be dealt with and that overfishing is not the only problem.[20]

The following accounts of meetings of VMRC reflect the drama of the events that also befuddle and exercise watermen, who, though impatient listeners, are straight talkers:

> When members of the Virginia Marine Resource Commission adopted new protections Tuesday for the troubled Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab, not all their thoughts were on crabs, watermen and seafood markets. . . . They also were on Richmond. . . . Call it gentle persuasion, leverage, or even legislative blackmail. But the case illustrates how politics often plays as big a role in delicate fishery decisions as marine science or market economies.[21]

> What happens when government officials pass new regulations but aren't sure what they actually mean? . . . That was the unsettling predicament facing the Virginia Marine Resources Commission Tuesday, as members tried to unravel their new set of protections for the prized but declining blue crab population in the Chesapeake Bay. . . . members blamed the confusion on a discombobulating mix of uncomfortable chairs, long-winded speakers, intense public pressure, conflicting scientific data and an underlying problem that the state crabbing industry is too big and too complex to restructure in one afternoon.[22]

> Facing mounting opposition, and an agitated crowd of burly fishermen, a state senator Thursday night withdrew. . . . his bill to impose stricter trap limits, freeze commercial crabbing licenses and virtually ban the harvest of pregnant female crabs easily passed the Senate two weeks ago. . . . Several committee members said they opposed the bill because they believe the commission, which is staffed by scientists and fisheries managers, should decide fishing policy and not politicians in Richmond.[23]

Is it any wonder then that the watermen's minds fly back to the days of their fathers and grandfathers and even beyond when "the right of plunder" was normal and caused no visitations of guilt? They understand the relevance and reasonableness of disagreements and reversals. Events and messages such as these, however, cause them to shudder. Defensible as some of the arguments are, at times the watermen seem to think that the agency personnel are guilty of sleight of hand and flip-flopping, which might be the basis for the watermen's becoming resentful of the holders of the "special knowledge" that determines the course of their lives.

One thing that seems to be constant with the protections for the Bay is that overfishing is the major problem, though there are some who feel that the problems are more land related than sea related and watermen related. Had they the "classical education" of the regulators, the watermen might offer the advice of Daedalus to Icarus: "Follow the middle course." Should the government decide to shut off the Bay to the watermen, some of them may wonder whether the government might do for them what it did for the farmers, who are rewarded for not planting, and for tobacco growers, who are likely to receive trusts. Like most, the watermen will gladly take government support when eligible for it, but now, though beleaguered, they do not prefer artificial support systems or arrangements. They really do not want a dollar they do not make. The Bay has not showered the watermen with great wealth, but it has provided them with a living, the loss of which would become a crisis of commanding gravity. Though the steeliness of their resolve has fault lines and is worrisome, it is understandable because their spirits become deflated at the thought of having to claim another way of making a living. What other way would they have a claim to?

Whether a constructive and fair solution is provided remains a question. Conviction that it will remains low among the watermen. Apart from the fishery problem is that at stake is a unique place with a unique population and a special variety of talk, at least as important, one would think, as the piping plover and the recreational fishermen and boaters. One parting question: can the scientists flatly say that, had all the pollution events and other destructive habits and diseases never developed, overfishing would still have been the cause for the decline of the Bay's fisheries?

That some of the attitudes and transgressions of the watermen stick in my throat does not cause me to blush in presenting their position and frustrations over the ongoing discussions of expanding regulations. However, I would be less than truthful if I did not say that they have a chink in their armor, that they understate the problem and are not exactly forthright in their stance, and that they are not blameless for the conditions they find themselves in. Contrary opinions get them overwrought. They bristle even at a murmur of the words "environmentalists" and "Chesapeake Bay Foundation," the positioning of which on "their" East Point, now named "Port Isobel," some may even consider a plague of God cast upon them for their sins—not those, of course, of environmental abuse. Some have said of the watermen of the Bay that the most discouraging to work with on Bay problems are the Tangiermen. No doubt about it, they do kick back. Earlier, I defended their reactions

to regulation by trying to show just "where they are coming from," and how little concern there has been for their livelihood. Their handed-down lore, and their only argument, has basically consisted of the "right of plunder," which deserves some appreciation, but not approval, and their oft-uttered and tersely phrased adage of "good years-bad years," which the scientists, unfortunately, have difficulty convincing them of anything better because of their own "confusion of voices." These voices, however, confused or not, must have sooner or later a receptive ear. If sooner, they may be taken as a warning. If later, they may just be a eulogy or an epitaph.

Watermen must come to appreciate conflicting arguments and learn, in the words of Polonius, "By indirections find directions out." The argument of "good years-bad years" is worthy of notice, but hidden in that utterance is probably a belief in the "resilience of indestructible nature," which never seems to die and has led to the destruction of valuable resources. One only needs to mention the demise of the legendary codfish, which had a long and glorious run for hundreds of years and now is just about gone.[24] One cannot reduce neither the watermen nor the environmentalists and scientists to any single position and assert that either should unequivocally prevail over the other. Yet as hard as it is for me to say, the accumulated scientific knowledge cannot continue to be ignored by the watermen and the public management agencies. One can have, according to William J. Hargis, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Marine Science at VIMS, some understanding of the watermen's recalcitrance, but the reluctance of the public managers to recognize the severity of the fishery problems is much more difficult to rationalize and understand.[25]

Maybe, hope is not done. An event, cited earlier, that took place March 13–15, 1998 on Tangier offers some encouragement for a break in the watermen's mistrust of environmental groups and regulating agencies and a change in the latter's condescending treatment of the watermen. I am referring, of course, to the Tangier Watermen Community Stewardship 2020 Initiative Conference, a gathering of watermen of the Chesapeake Bay communities; members of local, state, and federal agencies; representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Accomack County Board of Supervisors, Office of Sustainable Ecosystems and Communities, Center for Public Justice, Western Pennsylvania Conservatory, NOAA, VRMC, and VIMS; academics from several universities countrywide; Tangier citizens; and many other interested people such as me. The meeting was spearheaded

by Susan Drake, a young doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin, and hosted by Swain Memorial United Methodist Church and the New Testament Church. What took place were prayer bands, services, discussions, and exchanges of views about ecological issues and biblical stewardship principles—and by watermen and their wives, citizens of the Bay community, church leaders, scientists, and state and federal representatives alike. There were as many solemn protestations of faith and concern for God's creation from the learned as there were from the watermen and ordinary citizens.

Before the event, on Sunday, February 10, 1998, fifty-eight of the 178 Tangier licensed watermen created a document they called "The Watermen's Stewardship Covenant" and publicly committed themselves to it. In essence, it follows:

> The Watermen's Stewardship Covenant is a covenant among all watermen regardless of their profession of religious faith. As watermen, we agree to be good stewards of God's creation by setting a high standard of obedience to civil laws (fishery, boat, and pollution laws, for example, laws against dumping things overboard) and to commit to brotherly accountability: If any person who has committed to this Covenant is overtaken in any trespass against this Covenant, we agree to spiritually restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. We also agree to fly a red ribbon on the antennas of our boats to signify that we are part of the Covenant. For the professing Christian waterman, this Covenant additionally means that we agree to set a high standard of obedience to God's laws and, therefore, to civil laws. We agree to pursue a crucified and resurrected life—a selfless life—that is yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We fly red ribbons also to symbolize the blood covenant for which a great sacrifice of God—his only begotten Son—was made. As Christians, we understand that each of us is accountable to God. Therefore, we do not judge one another; rather, we resolve not to put a stumbling block or cause to fall in our brother's way (Romans 14: 12–13). We agree to let love be without hypocrisy, to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good (Romans 12:9), and not to destroy the work of God for food [crabs/oysters/fish/clams], (Romans 14:20). Furthermore, we agree not to overwork to be rich (Proverbs 23:1) and to love the lord our God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws, and his commands always and to receive the grace of God (Deuteronomy 11:1).

These watermen have pledged to obey fishery, boat, and pollution laws and to urge others to do likewise with the hope of protecting their heritage and the Bay and of ensuring a future for the Bay communities. Just recently, I was told by some residents that the streets, yards, and canals remain clean after the initial cleanup,

and many of the crabbers are now bringing sacks of trash that they used to throw overboard to the docks and disposing of it in town receptacles. The belief is, moreover, that the original 58 have been working in obedience of the Covenant. The challenge ahead is for the 58 to become 178—and then to go on from there. This does not sound like much, but it is a start. Is it not curious and remarkable that, of all people, it was a young born-again Christian and graduate student who provided the spark for this undertaking? Also, is it not even more curious that Tangier's long succession of devout ministers had not thought of this earlier and had taken the initiative to do something about it?

Such a commitment is praiseworthy. However, it may not be enough. The watermen want to be free of regulation, but most of them do not want to change their ways. The public managers have a worthy, but problematic, desire of pleasing all the involved parties. Despite the sometimes conflicting findings of the scientists, which the public managers and watermen have tended to belittle and to discredit, the eyes of reasonable people must see that it is the scientists who are on the right side of the issue and should prevail. If they do not, it will not bode well for the future of the Bay, which, of course, would be a shame for all involved. More watermen realize the weakness of their position than think it politic to admit. Such a stance brooks no compromise. Indestructible nature and natural revitalization are cozy notions to behold. Evidence abounds to show that they are more often than not soft-headed impulses, notably when humans are a part of the picture. That it is well within our nature, as history shows, we must be careful that we do not beat the Bay to death. Like others, watermen do not live alone. What they do affects everyone and everything else. Hope is that the Tangier 58 become a counterchorus to the 178 and others all over the Bay like them, who maintain a disdain for any kind of regulation. The watermen's "waning and waxing" diagnosis of the fisheries has an element of truth; the larger truth, however, is the persistent decline, which calls for long term solutions, not short term fixes. For years a blight has hovered over the Bay. If ignored, it could become an agent of death. Not to be too extravagant, but if the watermen and public managers continue to forestall, they may become both tragic and elegiac figures and the Bay past recovery.

5
Worship

THE CHURCH, THE FIRST OBJECT ONE CATCHES SIGHT OF UPON approaching Tangier Island, is the tallest and best-built structure, the steeple of which towers over all the other buildings. Calling attention to this scene should not lead one to conclude that the Islanders are always in deep reflection about God and the church and are constantly seeking religious truth and satisfaction. They are, like most, fastened to reality and chained to the daily grind of life, its joys and its sorrows. The very nature of their daily lives demands a sober recognition of and a response to things as they are. Yet, it requires more. For Tangier Islanders, the "more" is supplied by the church, from which their values and answers to ultimate questions are derived. They are a religious people whose views—when it comes to life, the church, the Scriptures, and God—are not characterized by moderation or give-and-take. The Gospels and the Prophets, or any passage in the Bible, are not to be tampered with. They are not on a quest for "truth" or particularly concerned about an inquiry into the nature of God and the universe, nor drawn to doctrinal and theological argument. They are preoccupied with living and worship. The Bible is the answer for their questions and the final guide for their relationships with others and family and for what lies beyond. They, churchgoers, marginal churchgoers, and nonchurchgoers alike, backed against the wall, would be hard put to it to deny that their lives and events on Tangier are not protected by "God's hand."

Their spiritual beliefs, though rooted in the reality of their daily concerns, go beyond them in that they believe that goodness is woven into the fabric of humanity but that the Devil, who has a kind of grandeur and at times is on the rampage, is always lurking in the seams. The church or worship is what brings the Islanders together and what is responsible for forming the character of the community and the strong sense of togetherness that prevails. Whatever anguish they may encounter, about suffering and the

questions of the meaning of life, they are hopeful, even confident that the church will provide comfort and answers. Religion on Tangier is not a casual exercise; it is a way of life that sustains and directs them as they go about their daily lives of hardships, pain, and good times and bad times. They go to church Sundays (mornings, midday, evenings) and evenings on Wednesdays, and they have men's and women's prayer "bands" throughout the week. They are accustomed to ardent sermons and joyful singing and in class meetings are moved to testify about the blessings of Christ in their lives, no matter the hardships they may have undergone. There is a common sentiment about birth, death, marriage, right and wrong, their relationships to others, and God. This is the nature of their church life and has been since the coming of Methodism on the Shore, and apparently it has not waned.

All this should not be taken to mean that anyone is of the opinion that the Islanders are a holy priesthood, pure in mind, thought, spirit, word, and deed. They have their warts and blemishes and some are rascals and flawed, a combination that most acknowledge as the general condition of people everywhere. However, their task essentially is to preserve and live the religious traditions of earlier times as they believe they were.

The essence of the Islanders' faith and the controlling social influence of their lives have roots in the history of early Methodism, best exemplified in the life of its charismatic preacher or "exhorter," Joshua Thomas, who was born in Somerset County, Maryland, in 1776, and died on Deal's Island, Maryland, in 1853. In 1799, at age twenty-three, he bought seventy acres of land on Tangier and lived there with his wife, Rachel Evans, and children until 1825, when he moved to Deal's Island, after spending, according to his own testament, the best twenty-five years of his life. Yet, he continued his religious work on Tangier and elsewhere until he died. Thomas, though uneducated and scarcely able to read the Bible, became the first great preacher on the Eastern Shore. Known as "the Parson of the Isles," Thomas became not only the best known and most popular preacher among the islands but also on the Delmarva Peninsula. A historian of the Methodist Church explains: "his profound understanding of simple truths of Christianity, his unquestioned religion, his wit and picturesque spontaneity of speech made him a forceful personality."[1]

The early history of Methodism on the Eastern Shore is closely tied to Joshua Thomas's conversion in 1805 at a Pungoteague camp meeting. Thomas, a Tangier boatman at the time, had been hired

"Swain Memorial United Methodist Church." Photograph: Donna Crockett

to run some people from Maryland to the camp meeting. He explains what happened to him:

> I was so filled with the spirit of life and love I could not help shouting to the glory of God with all my might. . . . I went all over the campground in this way, telling everybody what a happy change I had experienced, and urging them to pray for it immediately. The whole night I spent in this manner, and sinners fell in heaps in different parts of the camp, crying to God for deliverance. A great many were converted that night.[2]

Immediately after his conversion, he sailed home to Tangier, and with the help of his wife and a John Crockett, he started to hold prayer meetings and religious services. At the first meeting in John Crockett's home, a John Parks opened the meeting with a prayer. At this meeting, the story goes, two were converted, and at following ones a few more. This little group later became a Methodist Society. Contact with the mainland was to follow, and then in 1808 the first camp meeting was started on Tangier beach and lasted, excluding the period of the War of 1812, until 1857. Throughout these years, boats full of people from all over the Chesapeake Bay came ashore every summer to the beach of Tangier for the camp meeting. At one such meeting, it has been said that a many as ten thousand people attended, for not only was it a religious event but also a festive occasion. What follows is an account of a camp meeting in 1828 by Henry A. Wise that I wish to quote because of its series of vivid scenes and its panoramic representation—too good and too rare a glimpse not to provide in its entirety:

> There collect the great campaigners of the pulpit, some of the greatest divines and elders; there are fathers and mothers and sons and daughters of the Church; there collect people of the world of every degree and dignity; there are hucksters and caterers for the "multitude come not to be taught"; there are whole families with household utensils and every appliance which tent can afford to table. Some come in steamers from Baltimore, Annapolis, and Cambridge, Maryland, and from Norfolk and Fredericksburg and other towns in Virginia, and from both sides of the bay. And from every creek come vessels of all sizes, schooners, sloops, pungies, cats, canoes, and skiffs, loaded with people and provisions, until the island harbors are studded with shipping and a forest of masts, which gives the wharves and island the appearance of some considerable mart of commerce. The camp is regularly laid out in large squares, with wide streets. Bowers are erected on the pulpit-stands, and for the anxious benches and broad planks are nailed horizontally across the tops of posts for sand whereon to kindle light-wood flambeaux to illu-

mine the scenes at night. A police is carefully detailed of saintly watchmen, of pious pith and discretion, to keep order and to guard the camp, and the exercises are conducted under orders duly proclaimed by authority. No Salisbury Fair ever exceeded it in variety of stranger scenes, grotesque and grave, ludicrous and sad, sacred and sinful, affected and real. Here a powerful learned man of God pouring out the word of truth in great volume of lungs and labor and love; there his contrast of a little exhorter. Here prayer and inward groaning of spirit struggling openly with conviction; there a loud-mouth braying of hymns sung by nasal Stentors of psalmody. Here a trance of mute adoration, and there a cotillion of chasing shouters, cutting in and out and grasping of hands in a mazy dance of praise. Here one down under weight of sin, and there another leaping for joy and crying out for glory. Here a calm and solemn invocation to prayer, and there a stirring of anxious mourners. Here a crowd of whites worshipping without noise, decently, and there a mass of blacks and whites preaching, praying, exhorting, singing, shouting, bawling, yelling, up and down, whirling around in perfect Bedlam time of confusion worse confounded. Here the ministers of the Church winning souls away from Satan, and there the sons and daughters of vanity sipping the siren draught of sensual pleasure in all the ways of wanton delight. Here at night the camp at rest, and all its suburbs drinking, fiddling, dancing, and doing worse, uproarious in shameful frolic until morning light. The night is far spent, and at early dawn the horn is blown. The tents rise again to repeat the last day's scenes and exercises, and the sinners sink away to sleep until the curtain of night falls again. Whilst goodness is dealing out grace at the table of the lovefeast, huckster and vender are selling chicken pies, and barbecued, broiled, fired, and boiled fish, peaches and melons and cantaloupes, cider, crabs, and gingercakes, June apples, lemonade and ice cream. And if you cannot find religion, you may—and if not always on guard you will—lose your purse, for camp meeting time is always a time for stripping orchards and robbing henroosts, wherewith to make a penny for expenses whilst on the lookout for the main chance of picking and stealing in the midst of the crowded camp and its concomitants.[3]

Though the Tangier Camp Meeting, as indicated earlier, lasted until 1857, it began to decline after 1844. One reason was that Thomas by then was, at sixty-eight, a relatively old man, unable to move about the Chesapeake to oversee the meeting as he had done almost single-handedly since its beginning. Another is that the Methodist Episcopal Church split in 1844 into two denominations over the slavery issue. Tangier was one of only three congregations that went with the Northern Methodist Churches because of its stand against slavery. A third reason was that the Methodist Church leaders thought that it was becoming too commercial and

was providing too many opportunities, because of its popularity, for undesirable practices. There may have been another reason, for some thought that Thomas may have been somewhat of a difficulty for the regular clergy of the circuit. As noted, he had no education, was barely able to read, and was without official credentials. Add to this the fact that the Methodist Church was becoming more "official" and "sophisticated" and that Thomas himself was a determined and colorful figure, and one could easily see that he could be "something of an embarrassment for the regular clergy of the conference." Thomas was not a preacher but an exhorter, one who, after a sermon by the regular clergy, emphasized the crucial points of the sermon and admonished the congregation to accept and follow Jesus Christ as Lord. Stories abound about his colorful and charismatic exhortations and how they made the sermons more memorable. A typical account follows:

> all eyes were on him as he made his way to the pulpit. The congregation was silent and expectant as he first removed his hat, then his coat, and laid them carefully aside. He turned to the crowd as if to begin, but said first, "It comes to me, I must first *shout*!" Immediately he began to jump around on the platform, clapping his hands and shouting "Glory! Glory" at the top of his voice. The effect on the congregation was almost immediate, and soon they were shouting with him in a great swell of emotion. His contemporaries recall that the phrase he most often used in public speaking was "It comes to me. . . ." And there were times when the regular clergy, their sermons finished, must have dreaded to hear him say it, wondering what had come to him this time. He was more than once taken to task by the circuit preachers for his actions, but he remained resolute in his belief that he was duty-bound to shout, and that shouting, far from being an unacceptable form of worship, was even a means of grace. Similarly, he was unrestrained by the disciplines of proper hymnody. Although he knew by heart as many hymns as most pastors and people of that day, he hesitated not a bit to rewrite and rearrange the texts to suit his purpose at any given moment.[4]

As mentioned earlier, from 1808 to 1857, the only summer that the Tangier Camp Meeting did not take place was the year 1814, during the War of 1812. The British, under the command of Admiral George Cockburn, constructed a fort on the grounds of the camp meetings. Having declared the Islanders prisoners of war, Admiral Cockburn used the fort as a defensive means of making sudden attacks on American targets nearby and even as far away as Washington. Joshua Thomas's first encounter with the admiral was during the earlier part of the British occupation, when he boarded

the flagship of the British fleet and implored the admiral to stop cutting the shade trees of the campground, a request the admiral honored. The second encounter occurred when Cockburn asked Thomas to preach to his troops just before their setting out for an attack on Baltimore, news of which had been making its rounds on the Island. Thomas accepted the invitation, but with some misgivings, as rendered by Adam Wallace's account:

> I did not refuse, and yet I was very unwilling to perform this duty. I thought and prayed over the matter, and it came to me that I must stand up for Jesus as a good soldier in the fight of faith; and as some of these men might be killed in battle and never have another opportunity to worship, that it was my duty and privilege to obey their order and hold the meeting. At the hour appointed the soldiers were all drawn up in solid columns, about twelve thousand men, under the pines of the old campground, which form the open space in the center of their tents. I stood on a little platform erected at the end of the camp nearest the shore, all the men facing me with their hats off and held by the right hand under the left arm. An officer stood on my right and one on my left and sentries were stationed a little distance to the rear. As I looked around my congregation I never had such feelings in my life; but I felt determined to give them a faithful warning, even if those officers with those keen glittering swords would cut me in pieces for speaking the truth.[5]

In his sermon Thomas warned them that they would not take Baltimore and that, since many would die in their defeat, they should be prepared for judgment. After the sermon, Thomas turned from the troops in silence, then faced and walked home. As predicted, the attack on Baltimore failed. Cockburn returned to Tangier and then sailed away. The "faithful warning" of Thomas became news and made him a famous man along the Bay and throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. In 1835, the Philadelphia Annual Conference ordained Joshua Thomas, who had become a celebrity and who at this assembly caused great excitement:

> When his name was recommended for ordination, the only credentials presented in his favor were that this was the man who had preached to the British army at Tangier, and all the eyes of the conference strained to see him. When called to answer before the bishop the traditional questions about doctrine and discipline, he created a memorable scene very characteristic of himself. He appeared for the moment to be under considerable embarrassment, but put the brethren in great good humor by his simple and emphatic answer: "I don't understand as much about these matters as my beloved brother ministers here, but *as far as I*

know, to the best of my ability I will conform to all the rules of the Methodist Church; *you may depend on it!*"[6]

Thomas, at age seventy, made his last visit in 1846 to the Tangier Camp Meeting. After his death in 1853, the Tangier Camp meeting met for only a few years and never assembled again after 1857.

For many years, religion on Tangier was essentially Joshua Thomas and the Tangier Camp Meeting, because the early years of Methodism on Tangier were closely associated with the personal and religious life of this remarkable man. Apart from the Tangier Camp Meeting, however, religious life had already taken root on Tangier in the creation of a Methodist society in 1805 by a handful of Tangier men and women. The Society met in the homes of the Islanders under local leadership, chiefly that of Thomas but others as well. In 1825 the little group of only sixteen members was formed into a church but still gathered in the homes of its members for another ten years. In 1835, the first church building, named "Lee's Bethel," was constructed on some land provided by a Henry Crockett. By 1840 the congregation had grown so much that Lee's Bethel, a very small structure, had to be replaced by another building. In 1860 this building was enlarged, and by 1870, still another building was constructed as a continuing response to a series of revivals. The 1870 structure named "Mariner's Chapel" was built on an adjacent lot where the Education Building stands today. Enlargements and additions continued until 1899, when a new church, much larger than all the others, was built and in 1900 was named after its young minister, Reverend Charles P. Swain, who served for five years and died shortly after leaving. Swain Memorial United Methodist Church as a structure remains essentially what it was in 1900, but it has had improvements and additions, notably, the construction of the Education Building in 1963. What is remarkable about the growth and development of the Tangier church and congregation, we learn from the records, is that revivals quickly pushed construction, enlargements, and additions through bad times as well as good times.

The year 1946 was to be one of its bad years—in fact, a stressful one, when a disruptive breach took place in the religious life of Swain Memorial Methodist Church. At the center of the split of the congregation into two factions, according to those who remember, was Rev. James C. Richardson, who had become minister of Swain Memorial in 1943. Also prominent, and perhaps a catalyst, in the schism was Stella Thomas, a Tangier native, who had been a missionary in Africa for a number of years. Both were convinced that

the modern church was short of a deep commitment to Christianity and needed a different kind of spirituality. Their new quest became apparent in Richardson's sermons. Obviously, many members of the congregation became offended, even disturbed, not because Richardson and Thomas were not deeply committed Christians, but because they sensed that they and those members who shared their feelings were "holier than thou" and challenging the basic structure of the Methodist church. Those who shared their quest met with Richardson in special prayer and study groups, a development and a direction that threw the congregation into turmoil and division.

What brought the situation to a critical point was Richardson's decision in 1946 to hold daily morning services, in addition to those held on Sundays, in the church for his ardent supporters. This prompted the church elders to lock the church doors and to seek his removal. The Virginia Conference of the Methodist Church shortly thereafter reassigned Richardson to another church. When a new minister was assigned to Swain Memorial, Richardson, instead of leaving for a new church, stayed on Tangier, withdrew from the conference, and, with some of his followers, formed a new church on the Island called the "House of Prayer," which was later named the "New Testament Congregation." Rumors and tales about each other abounded for some years, some that Richardson himself almost had become the object of worship and devotion. A balanced account follows:

> The "schism" rocked the island, a community where religion had always been exclusively Methodist. Homes and families were divided by religious differences. In the fall of 1947 the tense situation erupted into violence when unidentified townsfolk broke into the new church, ripped away screens and doors, tossed furniture on the roof, scrawled graffiti on the walls, and threw the organ into the Chesapeake. Richardson himself endured harassment, although the Methodists insisted that such actions were not from any of their number. In this tense situation the New Testament Congregation took shape. Its principal tenets struck some of the old Holiness chords, although the language and style were different. The Congregation adopted an apostolic model of church government and life and, at Richardson's insistence, a shared "priesthood of all believers" instead of a professional clergy. For ten years the New Testament Congregation met in private homes or rented buildings on the island. Then in 1956 a simple church building was erected on Main Street south of the Methodist church, by which time Richardson had formed a second Congregation in Deep Creek on the mainland. In 1958 the Methodists invited a "wise old patriarch of the Church," the Rever-

> end Andrew Johnson, to conduct a revival. Johnson was a colorful and forceful speaker, at one time a candidate for Vice-president of the United States on the Prohibition Ticket. He took as his theme the very "deeper life" issues that had divided the community. When he preached "the doctrines of the deeper life so clearly that it would have been difficult for anyone to misunderstand," a revival occurred that leapt across the lines of controversy, and members of both churches worshipped together fraternally for the first time in twelve years. After 1958 relations between the two Tangier churches became cordial, but Christianity there remained divided into its liberal and conservative groups.[7]

For the following thirty to forty years, the churches became even more cordial, but an element of mistrust persisted, a great improvement, though, when one considers the hostility that characterized their lives for so long. Recently, Reverend Richardson was asked to preach at Swain Memorial, and, as a result, a number of cooperative activities took place. A turning point in the relationship of the two churches took place in 1995, when the churches organized a six-week revival, conducted, for the most part, by lay leaders. The result was over two hundred conversions:

> Men whose lives were made miserable by drugs and alcohol were healed of the addictive desires, and people so shy that they rarely uttered a public word now readily take leading roles in the church and testify openly.[8]

In October 1997 Swain Memorial had its centennial celebration (1897–1997), a week of worship, singing, and preaching by many of the ministers who had previously served the Church. For this, Reverend James C. Richardson was invited to speak. Members of the New Testament Congregation, which was at the same time celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, heard him and attended all the other services. Even though a generation or two had passed, some discomfort was felt, but a thaw in the hard feelings they had for each other was visible.

Swain Memorial United Methodist Church, one of the three largest churches on the Eastern Shore, has been described "as the best example in Virginia Methodism of a church that is still the center of life of its community."[9] Religion, it seems, has always been a part of the life matters of Tangier, and the place itself, isolated and surrounded by water, has in a word served to shape their religious life. Life on Tangier has never been one of abundance, for everybody, or, for that matter, anybody—that is, in comparison with

that of typical villages on the mainland. Though there have been some prosperous years, life, in the main, has been relatively harsh; some have longed for something a little better and a little easier. This is not to suggest that all of life is daily drudgery and dissatisfaction; it is not. A strong group life and state of mind exist. No matter what, storm or tragedy, the Islanders seem to stick together and do not act as if a rapt air of doom follows them. They somehow manage a smile, even a bit of cheer.

Tangier, to be sure, is a world of hard work and struggle, but it is also a world of worship, which works as a *keel*, the main structural form of a ship, holding the members attached. Frequent church meetings are a part of the structure of their lives and are times of high social and spiritual excitement. Because of this, observers may conclude that the community is religiously extreme, a seedbed of hard-boiled and repressive Puritanism. There is no denying that the people prefer lively and responsive, or even fire-and-brimstone, sermons, which they tend to think of as "preaching the Bible." To construe this, however, as a narrow and rigorous hostility to social pleasures and other forms of worship would not be fair. They have a deep vein of spiritual belief grounded in the Bible and manifested in religious observance that they forthrightly and unashamedly accept, embrace, and believe. In short, their blood gets up:

> Through the testimonies and prayers the writer had an opportunity to see the all-pervading and comforting religion and its place in the everyday life of the people. Some extremely secular things take on a deep religious significance. Their religion permeates their lives to an extent not usually found elsewhere. The meetings are real and intense, men shout and clap their hands and women weep. This religious enthusiasm affects those from fourteen or fifteen up to twenty-five as well as the older people.[10]

This description of a "class meeting" in the 1930s is essentially that found in a story of Tangier in a *National Geographic* article some forty years later,[11] both of which serve to show the continuity of the early Methodism of Joshua Thomas and his band of worshipers, more than a hundred years before.

No doubt, their blood still gets up, but to dismiss the nature of their worship as Holy Rollerism—emotional, austere, and repressive, with an ill-humored gloom about it, as if their drive is to keep its members chafing under a Puritan-like morality—is a misrepresentation. The class meeting, now almost extinct and only a part of a handful of congregations, was an important part of the church

"The Christian Crabber." Photographs: The author

mission of the early Methodist Society. It started out as a midweek meeting of a few friends sharing their concerns, hardships, and blessings. Still an important part of the church, it is now a Sunday morning gathering of a hundred or more of all ages who engage in singing, praying, and testifying about "the blessings they have received from the Lord during the past week."

The religious behavior of the Tangier community may be different and perhaps even more intolerant than most when appropriate behavior and worship are at stake, but their heritage of common sentiments about work and play and right and wrong have been much the same from one generation to the next. The facts are clear enough to show that this religious community is aware of daily human concerns, which prompt them to have a concern about the frailty of human flesh and the need for vigilance, especially among the young. The younger lot may, of course, feel the press of the older sort, who can be at times intolerant of youthful and devilish ways. That youth and age are often at debate, however, has been a fact of all generations and communities. From what I know about the Tangier community, I would argue that even the most devout and ardent members have a realistic sense of the opposition of youth and age and are not unforgiving, but rather quick to acknowledge that the young do not stay young forever. These members may even admit, perhaps with a sheepish grin, that they, too, were known to have earlier "sown one's wild oats," a cute phrasal cover for the indiscretions of their own youth. Even Joshua Thomas was known to have been "quite a dancer" before his "Damascus" experience. The nature and the condition of youth seems to be viewed with a certain indulgence as one of the medieval Stages of Man. Thoughtless and wrongful behavior would doubtless draw disapproval and blame, even severe reproof, but an awareness of youth as generally not a time of rational and virtuous behavior, plus a forgiving spirit for the wayward, creates in them a belief that the young should have some slack and be somewhat free of the strictest moral judgment and censure. The Islanders, churched and unchurched alike, have esteemed personalities like that of Joshua Thomas, who may have been a far cry from being pious during their youth. Many of their heroes through the years have been men and women like him, unlearned but the embodiment of the good religious life, who knew the Bible, could pray and speak publicly with force and meaning and with words that do not smack of prior composition—and who lived accordingly.

A defining moment in the religious lives of the Islanders is neither baptism nor confirmation, but, as some say, when they "went

down" or "got saved" or "joined the church," a way of saying that they have come to a spiritual awakening with remorse and a commitment to Christ and the church—in short, a conversion. Allow me to illustrate. Crab scrapers are prohibited by law from keeping "jimmies," the large male hard crab or blue crab, when they are scraping, the end of which is to catch peelers for shedding into soft-shell crabs. Some do, however, save a bushel or so of "jimmies," which their wives cook and pick to sell as crabmeat to supplement their income. A certain crabber, among others, had been doing this for years, fully aware of the law, without any visitation of guilt or sense of wrongdoing, though a churchgoer. On one of my trips to Tangier, I noticed that he was buying a bushel of crabs from a crab potter at market price for his wife to pick and sell. Knowing that this would cut into his profit considerably, I asked him why he was buying crabs. He replied that he "went down" and "joined the church." Enough was said. Such a religious conversion is not for show and taken lightly. Quite the opposite, it found expression in his daily life and conversations and in charitable acts and tithing.

Two other events can be mentioned to demonstrate the seriousness of their religious beliefs. The Chesapeake House, noted far and wide for its seafood, hosted a group of wives of prominent Virginia politicians, including the governor's wife, who had brought

"Hilda Crockett's Chesapeake House." Photograph: Donna Crockett

champagne along with them and wanted to have toasts. They were immediately and abruptly cut short and told very clearly, "You're not going to have that stuff in my place," by Hilda Crockett, the owner. On a later occasion, some regional politicians held a meeting there and asked for ice for the liquor they had brought, and they, too, were told by Hilda Crockett, "No drinking in my place."

A more recent manifestation of how seriously they regard their religious lives was the council's rejection of a request by Warner Brothers, a major Hollywood studio, to make a movie (*Message in a Bottle*) there starring Paul Newman and Kevin Costner. The members met, read the script, and said that the sex scenes, cursing, and selling of alcohol "were not the kind of things the council wanted associated with Tangier." The movie officials branded them "religious zealots," but that they are not. In fact, the Islanders, from word-of-mouth responses, op-ed sections of newspapers and editorials, and other media were generally applauded and praised for their response. They are purer in their worship and practice of religion than most; they do, however, have some understanding and tolerance of others' sinfulness.

Any visitors to the Island would have to be struck by the spirit and concern for others demonstrated by this congregation, a manifestation of which is the large Sunday offerings, running into the thousands of dollars, from so few adult members. It is even more astounding when one considers that the entire population of the Island runs to only several hundred, half of whom are children or elderly, and that their livelihood comes from the Bay, which today is suffering from diminishing resources. Their generosity cannot be explained by the biblical principle, "Give and it shall be returned." For they "give to give" and "not for return."

Working on the water is essentially a man's work. The men spend a lot of time together at work and on shore apart from their families, which, of course, would allow opportunities for "male things," such as telling bawdy jokes and unrestrained profanity, among other "men-like" tendencies. Warner, in *Distant Waters*, a book about the North Atlantic fishing trawlers, in his characteristic prose addresses the matter of profanity among fishermen:

> The fishermen in some chapters swear more than others. No national slights are thereby intended. All fishermen have their choice epithets. Some save them for moments of exasperation; others use them all the time. This does not mean, for example, that the Spanish fishermen who continuously employ religious oaths or the British fishermen who use all possible variants of a well-known four-letter verb are therefore either

> sacrilegious or foul minded. Their oaths and swearwords are mere interstices—points of emphasis, like raising one's voice—devoid of literal meaning. The reader should understand them, and take no offense.[12]

The remarkable thing about Tangiermen—whether in groups, on their boats, around the docks, or in front of stores—is that one does not hear from them coarsely obscene talk or see ugly degrading gestures, even though they are far out of earshot and eyesight of women and children. Forty years ago, a strikingly similar observation was made about them:

> In his everyday demeanor the Tangierman shows the influence of Methodism whether he be a churchman or not. The writer has never heard a swear word used in any group of Tangier people. When there are only a few men together and no churchmen present, there will be an occasional mild oath. One Tangierman became quite drunk but did not swear. Some of the young people, while away from the Island, did some swearing but not in the presence of their elders. Boys talk about sex and women in ways that would not please the church people, but they do not have the "foul" vocabulary of the shore.[13]

About the same time, a Shore newspaper editor had this to say:

> Tangier folk are a Godly people with Methodism the prevailing religion. They are loyal to their church which centers strongly in the life of the community. . . . The church is filled every Wednesday and Friday evenings, and five services were held on Sunday, all of which are conducted by the island's resident minister. One of the services is a class meeting, a service that was held in every Methodist Church in Virginia at the turn of the century. The religious zeal of the people is not emotional, careless worship that is soon forgotten, but rather that which accentuates a lifetime devotion of love and sacrifice.[14]

Today, Sunday services are structured as follows:

9:00 A.M.	Class Meeting (testimony, prayers, etc.)
10:00 A.M.	Sunday School
11:00 A.M.	Church (Morning Service)
2:00 P.M.	Prayer Service
6:00 P.M.	Fellowship
7:00 P.M.	Church (Evening Service)

On Wednesday evenings (7:00–8:00), members gather for Bible study; and on Saturdays (4:00–5:00), men's and women's prayer bands convene in selected homes for prayer and Bible readings.

Earlier observers from the mainland, professional and lay alike, have consistently recalled that the preaching services were conducted by the minister "with complete formal dignity" and with the congregation silent before, during, and after the service. The preaching by both minister and laity tends toward energetic and exhortatory expression and storytelling, inviting the audience to imagine and hold in their minds as they listen and experience the biblical stories. Such a style makes a powerful claim upon the memories of both old and young. Literacy today is, of course, much more widespread than it was generations ago. Earlier, it was uncommon to find more than a handful who could read and write confidently. Yet, many acquired a considerable knowledge of the Bible and were known for reciting long passages learned from the powerful readings and preaching of others.

The minister is supported by local or lay preachers and Sunday-school teachers. From all, the Islanders expect messages or preaching in the Tangier tradition. They expect the Bible to be center stage in sermons and their worship and vivid and enthusiastic preaching to be full of biblical description. There is not much compromise, nor apology, for the nature of their views about the Bible and the church's stated beliefs, which have to be described as fundamental. Much of the lay preaching is in the form of exhortation,

"The Methodist Parsonage." Photograph: Donna Crockett

much like that of the unlettered Joshua Thomas. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (6:10–13) may best set forth the essence of Tangier belief:

> Finally then, find your strength in the lord, in his mighty power. Put on all the armour which God provides, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil. For our fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens. Therefore, take up God's armour; then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and still to stand. (*The New English Bible*)

Sunday is a day of anticipation for the Island community, for their religion, to a large extent, affects how they live. The unifying and motivating character and force of their faith, it seems, is fixed in the plain man's religion of heaven and hell, the coming kingdom of God and impending judgment. Some have viewed their belief as not open and fearful of inquiry and dismiss it as complacent superstition with misty delusions. Tangier men and women speak and proclaim, they think, the gospel of the New Testament. To them, there is no doubt about what that gospel is, the good news of salvation. No other gospel in their minds is possible—a fact they think is made present in Jesus Christ.

Birth, marriage, and death are not thought of and codified as special occasions in the sense of *rites de passage,* where special ceremonies marked the passing from one state to another, as it may be in some groups or societies. The birth of a child is not followed by a specific ceremony; at some later date, the child is, of course, expected to be christened. Children are normal expectations of marriage and are generally thought of as a rather fortunate happening. Infant baptism takes place and is no different from that of other Methodist churches. Children, as a rule, are wanted and well cared for. They are special in the sense of their arrival, becoming the recipients of attention, care, and affection by the rest of the community. The Islanders "make over" all children on the Island, not just theirs. The typical Tangier Islander does not stop in the street to analyze or ponder birth beyond what is said here.

Marriage is a joyous occasion on Tangier, one that is also taken seriously. The social ritual of showers is practiced and serves the same purpose that it does in other communities. Marriage certificates and wedding pictures are framed and displayed, becoming treasures of the family. Some mothers will disproportionately

spend a lot on nice, expensive pictures of a daughter's wedding, at times slighting necessities and almost certainly becoming the target for gossip for doing so. Weddings may be simple, in the home or in the parsonage without formal wear and elaborate ceremony. However, more and more today couples are married in the church in formal wear, with groomsmen and bridesmaids, music and a reception. The church is always filled, because, as a rule, everyone is invited, though not all will come, but some of those who did not may show up at the reception, if there is one. One thing is certain: there will be no liquor. At the church door outside, those who attended will wait for the couple to send them off with throws of rice and showers of blessings. Eloping or just marrying without fanfare was common years ago but is rare today.

Divorce seldom occurs. A couple having problems or "quarreling," causes dismay in the families touched and even among the community at large. Unfortunately for some, years ago unspoken opposition to divorce was commonly solid, no matter how difficult and incompatible the marriage turned out to be. The Islanders seemed to have tacitly held on to the maxim "you made your bed, sleep in it." Today couples are slow to divorce; most parents want them to stay together to work things out, even if there is only a remote chance for happiness, especially if children are involved. Yet, though infrequent, divorce is not uncommon. Unlike most Americans, however, the Islanders do not even now accept divorce as a normal aspect of life.

A lot of money has never been needed to start a married life on Tangier. If the husband does not have his own boat, he can normally at first work with his father or someone else, and he and his wife will often live with one or the other's parents, most of the time with the parents of the wife.

On Tangier, death is, as it is everywhere, a sober and dire event. For Tangier families, however, it is calamitous because it is so closely bound to family welfare. Prolonged sickness and death can have a devastating effect on the lives of a Tangier couple. Though they are secure in knowing that they can count on relatives and neighbors and the community, their intimate concerns for the moment, because of the nature of a waterman's work, are overshadowed by their darkest fears at the loss of a husband or wife as for the family. This is not to say that the concerns about death are purely economic and are not a powerful force deeply felt. Even though graves in the yards and cemeteries and the dangers of working on the water amidst wind and storm are highly visible and constant, soulful reminders that their lives are in the shadow of disaster and

death, death is not taken as a matter of course. The news of a death spreads rapidly and resonates through the Island like a blast of icy wind. Two different accounts from different periods are instructive about the reaction of the community:

> When they came ashore, a crown of people gathered around. Some were crying, and others just could not believe what had happened. The men put Asbury on an oyster culling board that had been lying there by the dock and carried him down the road. Ed and I were sitting over by the window in the old schoolhouse when we saw a bunch of men coming down the road. I could see they were carrying something. There was a solid flock of people following. I strained my eyes to see what it was they were carrying. When I realized who it was, I felt so sad. When we got home, mom was in the kitchen. I could tell she had been crying. The word had spread quickly on the island. She told Ed and me to go feed the chickens and we did. I knew she wanted to be alone. I only remember a few drownings that occurred during all those years I lived on Tangier, but the drowning of Asbury Crockett is one I'll never forget.[15]

> There was something in the way people walked and talked in little groups on the street which suggested that something had happened. The writer felt that something was wrong without knowing what it was. This feeling and the change in behavior spread over the entire Island. There was a quieting down and slowing up of all activity.[16]

Just recently, soon after the stir of rejecting the Warner Brothers movie, I received a call from an aunt of mine who told me about the sudden and unexpected death of a young relative and her unborn baby. Her words: "We haven't had this before, a twenty-four-year-old mother and baby to die. . . . It took the wind out of the sails of the movie talk."

Tangier still holds onto the custom of sitting up with the dead, a solemn observance and reflection of respect that allows family and friends a time to console each other and tell stories, sometimes with cautious laughter, about the deceased. All funerals are held in the church preceded by a family gathering in a specified room with the body in an opened casket, which allows them a closer and more intimate viewing and the sharing of grief. Though death is felt as a menace and causes emotional crisis in their lives, it does not shake the moral and religious convictions of the community. The Islanders manage enough faith to see it as a part of a long journey home and the gateway to salvation, hoping that when death comes they are "right with the Lord." Described thus, one may question why and think it strange that they do not take death better, since it is,

according to their solemn vows, the only passageway to the bliss and promise of salvation that they spend and direct their daily lives to achieve. They would probably be bemused by such a question and would try to muster enough verbal skill to assure themselves and perhaps others that pain and joy are both facts of life and that meaning and solace can come only from a belief in a divine order of things and life beyond. They seem to assuage the grief of death, as a community with the feeling that deaths are usually accompanied by births, a notable concurrence vividly and poignantly represented in the 1941 film "How Green Was My Valley" in the words "Take One, Give Another" of the father of the Morgan family upon the learning of the death of a coal miner and the birth of a child.

Tangier, as small as it is, scarcely sufficing to maintain itself, has had its moments in history—not monumental ones, however—and for generations has remained an active and vibrant community. The stretch has been long and arduous, but blood continues to throb in the veins of the community, even though prospects are not encouraging today because of the ever-present threat of storm and the dwindling of the Bay's resources. Despite how precarious conditions are, the Islanders do not show hopelessness and are far from being subdued. The Island has been touched by discovery, piracy, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, loss in more recent wars, storm, depression, and scarcity—not agents of mass destruction to it, but those of disruption, which can be great when there is so little to begin with.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some incidents that reflect a darker and uglier side of Tangier life. I mentioned in the "To the Reader" section and elsewhere that the Islanders are a people of sharp contrasts. Earlier, I made clear that the community is essentially a good one but not a "holy priesthood." Tangier Islanders, with regard to things close to them, make sharp contrasts in taking sides on particular issues such as religion and their "rights" as watermen, where division can generate unbecoming behavior. For example, they think of each other as "Christians" or "sinners," a sharp contrast that can be blurred in some issues by behavior that can hardly be defined as "Christian." There are some who can stand before God and man expressing vows of piety and yet not blink at violating crabbing laws and regulations. More troublesome is the recent resurfacing of a kind of behavior that sharply reminded them of the 1946 splitting of Swain Memorial Methodist Church. Let me describe the split and then return to the current incidents.

Schism within a church tends to be emotional, distressful, and

full of anger. Few can condone what took place after the event of 1946 on Tangier Island. Those who left Swain Memorial then rightly thought of themselves as a group of extremely devout and honorable people with different feelings and an opposing view. They were, however, not only reviled and threatened but also intimidated and had violent acts committed against them. Rumors started to spread that the minister, his wife, and children were about to be forcibly removed from the Island. Later the minister's boat was sunk and after being reclaimed was sunk a second time. Members who had left and become the congregation of the new church, eventually called The New Testament Church, became targets: a seine shed was burned, copper paint was poured into gas tanks, equipment was damaged, bricks were thrown through windows, veterans from the War when drunk often taunted them, and one woman had her windows broken and was showered with profanity, even while the body of her brother was lying in her house awaiting funeral preparations. The houses they held worship in were frequently damaged, and some, left in shambles. In one incident, windows were broken, chairs were smashed, and the organ was thrown in a ditch. Even human excrement was dumped and smeared over the floor. This continued until *Newsweek* published a story describing the situation. The story led to the governor of Virginia creating a grand jury, which finally brought an end to the violence. What was so sinister about the whole affair is that the perpetrators seemed to act as though they had the approval of the mayor, the town council, and the leaders of Swain Memorial. True or not, it is a fact that none protested their destructive behavior.[17] What makes the whole event smack of evil and cowardice is that most, if not all of the acts were carried out under the cover of darkness—which reminds me of a saying of a journalist friend of mine, Ron Speer: "Good Deeds Are Rarely Done in the Dark." It is likely that many were appalled by the crudity and shamelessness of these acts, but apparently not enough, because very little censure followed and no one was ever really held responsible for them. Today both churches exist and do some things jointly, but it does not take long for one to detect that, though cordiality exists, the slightest provocation can rekindle the ember of mistrust.

Two recent incidents smack of the same stuff in that they serve to show that disagreement can stir up old grievances and bring about sharp reactions. In March 1998, as mentioned earlier, a conference titled "Stewardship 2020 Vision" was held on the Island to promote, among other things, respect for the environment. The central theme was the biblical concern for the creation. Hosted by

Swain Memorial and The New Testament Church as a joint venture, it was well attended by watermen, their wives, other Islanders, environmentalists from Virginia and Maryland, and representatives from federal and state agencies and commissions, all with concerns for the resources of the Bay. It was judged to be very successful, chiefly because there seemed to be a sharing of the views of the watermen and environmentalists. However, it was marred by someone's throwing in protest a brick and damaging the bulletin board at The New Testament Church. Before the weekend of the conference I learned that the principal organizer of the conference had been harassed, told that she was not wanted on the Island, and told that she should leave.

In the same month just before the conference, the incident of the rejection of the movie took place. Not all the citizens approved of this, though the mayor and the council had substantial support. Apparently, in retaliation, the owners of the tour boats "got back at the mayor," who at the time of the conference was hospitalized, by removing his car from their Crisfield parking lot. On Tangier, while he lay seriously ill, a golf cart that the mayor was renting from them was taken. These are not momentous incidents, but they are ugly, showing very little tolerance for disagreement, and ones that could cause one to question the integrity and relevance of the biblical tradition the Islanders so openly and proudly laud.

6

Community Concerns: Order and Government, Play, School, and Health

We must keep in mind that Tangier is an island community relatively insulated from and against life on the Shore. Continuity and change are factors in communities like Tangier, small as they are, but not as visible as in larger ones. What change comes is imposed basically from outside, new things and new ways of doing them. Such communities are usually thought of as small, traditional, simple, and homogeneous. Sometimes they are said to have a preference for traditional and practical knowledge over scientific knowledge and to be suspicious of newfangled notions and in their homogeneity express a band of common sentiments. It is generally thought that in these communities young people usually do what their elders did. These suppositions apply to Tangier, but not entirely so. Smallness does indeed shape who they are, what they have and desire, and what they need. Nowhere is this more apparent than in their approach to order, play, school, and health.

Order

The matter of order, though almost a nonentity, deserves some attention. The town charter calls for a mayor, a council of five (currently made up of three men and two women), and a policeman . The administrative chores, as one might expect, are few and not burdensome. In fact, what government exists is almost invisible—that is, until elections, which occur every four years, or when a big decision has to be made. Such a big decision was the one already mentioned, about whether the town would permit Warner Brothers to shoot the Kevin Costner—Paul Newman movie (*Message in a Bottle*) on the Island—an event that caused a stir and resulted in both fame and notoriety for the Tangier people.

The major services, such as electric power, road maintenance.

and so forth, are monitored from outside—that is, from Accomack County. Crime does not seem to be a problem. There are no courts and lawyers on the Island. "Lawyering" is not a big thing on Tangier. In fact, I have never heard of one person suing another. Family and church, in a sense, take the place of police, courts, and lawyers for social control. Should a person commit some unjust act or utter unkind words, public disapproval seems to be a sufficient remedy for the misdoing. In the 1930s, the Island had a Law and Order League that was responsible for wrongdoings and for appointing a law enforcement officer when the need arose. One story that has come down is about a young man's appointment one afternoon to handle a disturbance by three boys. He found the boys and put them in a designated "lockup." Later that evening, he got tired of the job, let the boys out, and set off for home. Whether this story is apocryphal or not, I am not sure, but it does sound like something that the Islanders would do. More serious grievances, however, such as the 1963 crab-house murder, a rarity, was, of course, handled by the Accomack court system. All in all, the matter of government and social control has remained through the years inconspicuous.

Play

Earning a living is the ruling fact of a waterman's life. During the crabbing season, for example, he gets up at three in the morning, culls at his crab house from overnight shedding, goes scraping for peelers or potting for hard crabs, until around noon, culls what he has caught, fishes his floats, packs the crabs for market, eats dinner around two, and returns to the crab house every three or four hours to cull the floats until about seven. If he and his wife choose to, they steam a bushel or two of "jimmies" and pick them until bedtime.

The leisure time the waterman wrests from this daily regimen he spends mainly at home. The press and routine of his daily working shapes the lives of the waterman and his family, allowing little time for play or leisure. The forms of recreation known in larger communities are few and rare on Tangier basically because work intrudes into all of the people's twenty-four-hour day. Being away from work, even for a short time, could possibly be considered a luxury, but it more likely would be an uneasy interruption, a loss of money, and a cause of guilt—for the watermen live on the very edge, constantly aware of the threat of bad weather and worrying about the uncertainty of the catch and the fluctuations of the market. As a

rule, leisure time is informal and happenstance. However, there is not a poverty of recreation; the Islanders do have a range of pleasures available and satisfying to them.

The Islanders have diverting activities that could be construed as leisure, amusement, enjoyment, even fun, or intervals of rest and relief from work. Like most Americans, they spend a lot of time watching television—and earlier, listening to the radio—preferring sports and soap operas. They all seem to have their favorite sports teams and players and television programs. Since many of the families now have cars, which they keep on the mainland, they do much more shopping at numerous strip shopping centers along the Shore but predominantly at malls in Salisbury, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach.

Promenading King Street and visiting friends and relatives are one and the same on Tangier and are a frequent sight. After the big meal of the day, "dinner," around two or three o'clock, King Street is busy with people of all ages. Women and men and boys and girls are walking, biking, or riding in golf carts, some chatting along the way and greeting almost everyone they run into, and others visiting relatives or headed to the gift shops or other stores. Conversations may concern current matters and happenings, sometimes gossiping, or the successes and failures of the day's work, and they end up with reminiscing about family and friends living and those long dead. What is striking about these chance gatherings is the openness, verbal play, expression, and irony, almost always accompanied by loud vigorous laughter and a playful mocking and teasing about incidents now and years ago. Such are characteristic daily pleasures.

One would think that water sports would abound, but the water is associated with work for the Islanders. Even so, fishing, boating, and swimming are a part of their lives. Some hunt for a mess of ducks or geese, but, as almost everyone knows, hunting on Tangier is for the Islanders also a business, mostly for strangers. A Tangier Islander's skill at handling boats is well known. Men demonstrate this skill in contests, such as the annual one at Crisfield, Maryland, where they compete for prizes in the demonstration of docking skills.

The real pleasure of boating on Tangier is enjoyed by the young, as vividly illustrated in the following account:

> "Eeee-e-e-eye! Eeee-e-e-eye!" The welcoming whoop came from a small, tanned youngster of 8 or 9, zigzagging his outboard motor boat at dizzying speeds across our bow. White teeth bared in glee and sun-

> bleached hair tangleblown by the wind, he swarmed around our docking boat like a skittering water bug. "Eeee-e-e-eye!" he shrieked. Tom Weston, skipper of the 40-foot *Mona Lisa II*, throttled back hard and motioned the boy away with a long sweep of his arm. Laughing, the boy turned and sped away past our stern. As the *Mona Lisa II* eased smoothly alongside the pier, the sound of the boy's motor, fading across the water, erupted into a series of jerking coughs. Slowly the boat turned around and pointed in our direction again. As if quietly taking aim, it sat momentarily still in the water. Then a sudden roar exploded, and the bow shot high out of the water as the boat leaped forward, streaking breakneck straight toward the pilings where we were docking. Gaining momentum, on it came, faster and faster. I sucked a quick breath. Then it was almost on our stern, revving hard, the dock coming up fast. Suddenly, the motor shut cold and the boat, bow out of the water, spun 180 degrees around, swinging to port, and settled down into the water, rocking slowly in its own wake. It was a crack maneuver, a real hot dog. Calmly, the boy looked up at us and asked, "Whur you frum? Whur you think to stay? Board or Miz Crockett's?" Before we could answer, the boy's attention was diverted by three or four friends in small boats racing out the channel towards the open bay. In an instant, his motor kicked into action and he was gone, chasing after his playmates. When he had "braked" his boat and turned it about face, he had done it with the ease and assurance, and with the same innocence and fun, as a mainland youth skidding his bicycle in the dirt.[1]

How can this be fun and enjoyment? People on the Shore, we know, get a thrill out of just driving automobiles and "feeling the road." An Islander would reply, "Don't say we don't have fun and enjoy the water." Perhaps one would have to be a part of this social activity to appreciate it.

The Islanders enjoy talk. The men, after the day's work, may gather around the docks in late afternoon or in the stores along King Street in early evening to relax, play dominoes, or talk. Mainly they talk. They talk almost entirely about the day's work, the economic outlook of crabbing, and the always impending state and federal regulations. They swap yarns, talk sports, and eat crab and oyster sandwiches with coffee and a Pepsi or Coke, the strongest beverages offered on the island. Observing these events, a sort of club atmosphere, is the only way one can realize the nature of them and the considerable amount of pleasure the Islanders derive from them. These gatherings at the stores are not new but have been going on for years, as an account from the 1930s shows:

> The stores are . . . where most of the older men and a few younger men . . . gather in the evening to talk quietly and seriously. During the crab-

> bing season, in particular, they spend a good bit of their free time there from about five in the evening until the stores close at ten. The older men have a keen sense of humor manifested not so much in the telling of jokes as in the giving of a slight twist to a story or description. As these older men . . sit around on benches, counters, and boxes talking and smoking, they reveal much about the real life of Tangier.[2]

Things have not changed much. In addition to providing considerable pleasure and recreation, these gatherings do something more. They reveal a great deal about the status of younger men in the group and how they, unless they are called upon, more often than not, sit and listen before they stand and speak, a practice that exposes them to an oral tradition and provides them with matter that they otherwise would not have about their history. Moreover, from these gatherings, one can get a genuine essence of Tangier talk. As a rule, no women are present. Women may have other places to chat, across the fence, in front yards, in the kitchens and on the porches of friends and relatives, or even in stores where men are not usually found. They may talk about their husbands' daily catch or about home and family matters or even gossip. Men and women are seldom, if at all, together on such occasions. One must remember that as recently as forty to fifty years ago, men and women were seldom seen walking the streets together or sitting together in church. Today it would be rare to see women amongst these store groups. It is true, however, that in earlier years women were seen in stores during the gatherings, though not as part of the group:

> While the men are there, the women do not enter, or if they do so they do not stay. Women often come to the front or back door only. In one store they come only to the front section of the store while the men always congregate in the back.[3]

Just recently I noticed that outside the Double-Six Confectionery, a favorite spot and now a nonsmoking establishment, a gathering of men engaging in a typical exchange of talk and laughter, but no women were there to be seen. This routine has endured, perhaps, both the practice and the exclusion of women, because work itself is a pleasure for the men, despite the strain and toil, and it carries over into the verbal play and lively discussions in the evening.

Some years ago Tangier had annual homecomings in August, drawing relatives from all over for reunion, fun, games, entertainment, and above all, delicious food of all kinds—and a lot of it. Homecoming was instituted just after World War II by the Methodist Church as a means of raising money. At first, it was set up on

the beach, but later on the Main Ridge near the waterfront. It became an affair that drew home many Islanders who had earlier left for the mainland. In preparation, houses and lawns were fixed up, events were planned, and great supplies of food, especially seafood, were gathered for the numerous counters and cooking booths. Festivities every year included a baseball game with nearby Smith Island, entertainment by local talent and by some from the mainland, and, of course, group gospel singing. It was a great event for years, but like so many of its kind, it suffered from a lack of cooperation and finally died. A year or two ago, however, some Islanders talked about reviving Homecoming, and even held a "mini"-Homecoming, which led to a reinstitution of the event in September 1999.

The church itself is another source of recreation, if we can shake loose the sense of frivolity of the word to emphasize the meaning of "re-creation" as "creating anew." After a week of working the water, a re-creation of the mind and spirit that the church brings generates for the watermen and their families refreshment, relaxation, comfort, solace, and joy. The children here are probably like those everywhere. They do not wake up Sunday mornings and yell "Wow, we're going to church." As mentioned earlier, church functions bring the Islanders together most of Sunday, Wednesday evenings, Tuesday mornings (women's prayer bands), and Saturday nights (men's prayer bands). The religious activities are most certainly religious, but they are also social and recreational because they are saturated with suppers, prayer meetings, testimony, singing, and talking, all of which give emotional outlets, relaxation, and pleasure.

Finally, the greatest source of freedom from work and chores for the Islanders is the home, the usual cozy sanctuary that brings them pride and comfort and restoration for the next day's work.

School

The first modern school system on the Eastern Shore began in 1870.[4] Not much is known about education on Tangier before the years 1926–27 because accurate records are not available. What is known, however, is that in 1896–97 there were three small schools on Tangier: a single-room school with one teacher on both Canaan and the West Ridge and a larger one with two or three teachers on the Main Ridge. After some migration to the Main Ridge from the other ridges, a three-story structure was built there in 1905. Twenty-seven years later, after the 1905 structure had decayed

"The Tangier Combined School." Photograph: Donna Crockett

badly, a new school was built in 1932 in strict accord with the specifications that the Commonwealth had for small-town schools.

During the earliest years not many people could read and write with any degree of confidence and skill. By the thirties, many of the residents had fourth and fifth-grade educations, with others having much less and some more. The 1932 school was modified and expanded during the years and was completely replaced by a new school on an adjacent lot in 1998.

During the decades of 1890–1900, 1900–1910, and 1930–40, the population of Tangier ranged from a thousand or so to around eleven hundred or so. Now, 1999, the population is fewer than 700, the result of a steady decline since World War II. There is no record of the number of students before 1926–27, but from 1927 to 1932 the number ranged from 204 to 334, a surprisingly high number for so few grades (1–7). During the latter part of this period, there were about eight teachers, including the principal.[5]

Today, the Tangier Combined School, fully accredited, offers instruction from kindergarten through high school. In recent years, the enrollment has been around a hundred or more with a faculty of twelve to fourteen, including the principal, and four teaching assistants. Obviously, the classes are small, with a teacher: student ratio hardly ever reaching more than 1:12. Graduating classes sel-

dom number more than ten, with a few students going on to college, some of whom have returned to the Island to teach. Word has it, had there been greater demand for teachers, others would have done so also. About fifteen years ago there were thirteen teachers, eleven of whom were natives of Tangier and had graduated from Tangier High School. The teaching assistants, as one would expect, were also from Tangier.

For illustration, let us take the year 1986: nine students graduated and all went to college. When this class started kindergarten thirteen years earlier, there had been eighteen. Of the nine who did not stay in school, most are working on the water. In other years, there were some who graduated from high school and still elected to work on the water. Conditions today are pretty much the same. Most of those who go off to college and graduate rarely return to live.[6]

Now these facts bring us to the same questions all communities have about their schools. Given local conditions, what should they teach? Such a question, considering the nature of Tangier Island, is of utmost importance. All would agree that an education must address the needs of the community. Even though more are graduating now, what is elemental here is that most of the male students end up working on the water. Certainly then, the school must consider those who need a practical education, which on Tangier means one that would provide the wherewithal for adapting to the Island's occupations, which in one capacity or another deal with the catching and marketing of seafood. The other obligation is providing sufficient academic background for those who choose other vocations or desire to go on to college. Two facts apply here. First, much of what a boy who wants to follow the water needs to know he has already picked up by the ages of thirteen to fourteen. What can be said of boys can be said about the girls who become wives and mothers. Another matter is the universal desire of parents that their children have a better life—and that today means more than a high school education. Underlying the whole question is the fact that with so few people in the community the resources are limited. Even though most parents think it a great honor if a child graduates from high school, many of their children want to stay on the Island. As everyone knows, it is not an easy life, but it can provide a good living and a good life, though it is harder to achieve today.

So then, what should the community demand of the school? The answer is, essentially what it does now. It stresses fundamentals (reading, writing, consumer mathematics, and science) and a work ethic that the citizens hope will equip them to cope with life's de-

mands on or off the Island. Since many of the boys do not want to go to college and prefer to be watermen, the school tries a practical approach; for example, it provides ample time in the curriculum for the designing and making of crab pots, dredges, and boats.

Even with modest objectives, as mentioned, the smallness and remoteness of the school have their effect on education and are troublesome and demand special efforts. The library, though fully certified, has relatively few volumes. The principal, at the time of this writing, in addition to his administrative duties, taught history, did guidance counseling, monitored the lunch room, played with the kids in gym classes, dispensed supplies, did the bookkeeping, and proofread the school paper. One faculty member taught shop, economics, and consumer mathematics. Another taught earth science, chemistry, biology, and physical science. The librarian, the holder of a doctorate, also taught driver education.

The students do without a lot: they have too few electives, not many athletic and recreational facilities, not enough extracurricular activities, and a rather narrow offering of subjects. Only a few students grumble, however; most feel they have gotten an adequate, even good, education. The community, the faculty, and the principal all have acknowledged through the years the lack of resources and consequently have felt at times frustrated, but they are convinced that the students get a quality education. Surely they must, for those who go to college generally do well. The new school, the nicest of its kind in the Bay area, is a great improvement, of course, and promises to make an already effective program better.

There is something more that is a part of Tangier school life: an intangible, one may call it, but, more accurately, it is called an asset: a sense of community as family. The students have known each other, their families, and most of the teachers since they were born. They speak of their closeness: "We're closer than brothers and sisters; we've done everything for almost all our lives." Also, there are the energy, interest, and care of the teachers and their assistants. They cannot really avoid getting wrapped up in the lives of their students for obvious reasons. One student remarked about the teachers: "They're strict; you do something wrong and they're on the phone to your folks." Thus, they are quite personal and at the same time aware of the need for discipline. Very early, the students become aware of the requirements: no shorts after the third grade, no T-shirts with questionable language or advertising of alcoholic beverages, no running and cutting up in the halls, punctuality in getting to class, respect for classmates and personal and school property—and doing your best. Not all students are happy

with the situation as it is, but they ultimately admit that it is good for them.

Though elementary school students have consistently made among the highest reading scores in Accomack County, the high school students score, as a rule, below the state and national averages on standardized examinations. On the other hand, those who go to college more often than not finish.

No matter the success, it should be kept in mind that high school comes at a time in a young Islanders' lives when they already have the knowledge and skills it takes to make a living on Tangier. Should they know, around age fourteen or fifteen that they do not want to leave the Island, they may find school a detriment and book learning suspicious, believing that they already have the knowledge, unpretentious as it is, that they need for success. What knowledge the young man has about work and the water he has acquired in perhaps the most effective way, by on-the-job training. Since early childhood he has worked with others, especially his father, and have been engaged in the rewards of work and the goals of the community as an adult—not to mention the feeling of making and having money of his own. The same mind-set can be true of the young woman who elects to stay home, but most of the young women have managed to stay in school and graduate.

School, then, to some means keeping them from family and work. This does not seem healthy, but there is an explanation beyond the obvious. Before compulsory school attendance, it would have been rare to find men with schooling beyond the fifth or sixth grade. Even though families then were extremely proud of a child finishing school and having a desire for college, boys did not, as a rule, stay in school, and instead they worked with their fathers full time.

Most of the Islanders through the years have achieved skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. There are only a few, however, even now who read, other than newspapers and church or biblical material, for sheer enjoyment and pleasure. There are notable exceptions. One was William Wesley Crockett, known to the Islanders as "Kisses," who was a lover of poetry and had memorized a great deal of the poetry of Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Shelly, and Tennyson and often performed before English faculty and students at nearby colleges. Such a man would be an oddity in any community. But education, if Tangier is to remain an active community, must continue to improve because with a better education comes an increase in opportunity for the children, who may sooner or later or for better or worse be attracted to the call of the mainland.

"Gladstone Memorial Health Center." Photograph: Donna Crockett

Health

Concern for the sick is very obvious in the Tangier community. On a recent visit to Tangier, I found that a relative had to be taken to a nearby hospital for a serious illness. As one would expect, a mere inquiry would bring tears to the family's eyes and anguish to their faces. This was so for the neighbors as well. The phone rang constantly, and the doors were opening and closing frequently with a flow of anxious friends and neighbors. Walking a mere block or two would draw further inquiry. In church that evening, everyone who spoke and prayed referred to this person, not that he was prominent among them but that he was one of them. On Tangier, sickness of this sort is major news. In the hospital, it is typical that the person will be visited in droves by relatives, friends, and neighbors.

"There is no hospital on the island, and one is seldom needed due to the hardiness of the Islanders and their families who wrest their livelihood from the Bay."[7] At first sight of Tangier as a working and walking community, this 1936 conclusion would strike anyone as sound, but as complimentary as it is, vigorous activity is not all there is to good health. Major factors then and now are nutrition and diet, eating and drinking the right kinds and amounts of food.

During the early days, when farming was a growing concern, the diet on Tangier was probably pork, chicken, eggs, wild fowl, milk, butter, cheese, greens, potatoes, corn, cabbage, turnips, figs, and, of course, a lot of fish and oysters. Salted fish then (and now) were common. If modern food preparation practices, or cooking, are any indication of earlier ones, we can easily assume that the cooks used a lot of salt, salt pork, and lard. Perhaps that is why some younger wives are often chided because they cannot cook as well as their mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers.

It is not likely that the diet changed a great deal until the early 1900s, the time when farming became rare, reduced to a garden here and there, while the community depended more on the Bay for a livelihood. With the passing of farming probably came the elimination of vegetables, milk, and cheese from widespread use. Replacements for these and other items were store products, including candy, ice cream, and soft drinks. It is not uncommon for watermen to consume a six-pack or more of regular Pepsis and Cokes during their hours on the Bay or for children to be seen running back and forth to stores for candy. Let me hasten to add, the implication here is not that consumption of a lot of sugar automatically leads to diabetes, or "sugar," as they call it, somewhat of a medical myth. However, with the absence of the proper minerals, it is unquestionable that such ingestion can make a person prone to tooth decay and to obesity, which is commonly associated with diabetes, not to mention stroke, kidney and gallbladder disorders, and coronary disease. In short, a lot of "scrunchions" and fat result in an unhealthy diet.

Nutrition and cooking style make up one possible problem. Walking, or the lack of it, may be another. Years ago there was a lot of it: people walked, toted groceries, and pushed supplies of one sort or another in pushcarts. Today there is relatively little walking, other than, of course, social promenading. Bicycles have been around for a long time and do, of course, require some physical effort, but they have been joined or replaced by motorcycles, golf carts, and small cars and trucks, the result of which is not much walking. Are they then as hardy as the 1936 writer suggested? Probably not. It seems that diabetes and hypertension are a problem, not just a rare occurrence. Tangier, according to recent newspaper interviews of doctors who regularly care for the Islanders, has "more than its fair share of those chronic diseases, along with their first cousins, heart disease and obesity,"[8] which they attribute to high salt intake and fried foods, lack of physical exercise, and cigarette smoking, almost exclusively by men. One of the three doctors has two other con-

cerns, "depression and alcoholism," which may be a propensity partially created by the community's frowning upon keeping liquor in the home and the belief that any amount of drinking is sinful, thereby forcing men to woodshed and aboard-the-boat drinking, which can often lead to drunkenness.

In such an isolated, well-defined community with so few families, the marriage of cousins is another matter that comes up because of the possibility of recessive genetic disorders, one of which has been named "Tangier disease," the presence of fatty tissue abnormalities. Tangier disease is an inherited blood disorder as a result of inadequate concentrations of high-density lipoproteins ("good" fat compounds), which could be the result of Founder's effect in that, with the early settlement, it may have been possible that one or two of the settlers had this deficiency and passed it down through the bloodline. What makes it likely is that the Islanders are isolated, live so close together, and have had since early settlement intermarriage. In 1960, a National Institutes of Health study discovered and named the disorder. What is striking is that in 1988 only twenty-seven cases were reported worldwide, and in 1992, fewer than 50, with the majority of them found in one area, Tangier Island. The lack of these fatty compounds in certain organs of the body (tonsils, spleen, liver, skin, and lymph nodes) cause tissue discoloration, organ enlargement, or blood circulation problems. In children, a clear visual characteristic of Tangier disease is the presence of enlarged yellow-orange tonsils. Because there is nothing particularly wrong with the gene itself, but with the cellular movement, the processes within the cell are difficult to detect, which makes treatment still in the investigational stage. The treatment so far, depending on symptoms, ranges from heart surgery to organ removal.[9]

The occurrence of medical folk practices and knowledge, common in isolated communities, is not highly visible today on Tangier, but the use of a mixture of coal oil (kerosene), lard, and sugar for sore throats and the pouring of warm water in ears for earache are still within the memory of many Islanders. Patent medicines were available early in the century in the stores, but the people, as the story goes, were very distrustful of them since they were generally wary of advertising and its claims. All communities, I suppose, in earlier years concocted stories about where babies came from. Tangier's was that they were found under fig trees.

Much has been made over the Island's lack of a resident doctor. In fact, if one happens to go outside the Tidewater area and mention Tangier, more often than not, if there is any response at all, it

will be "Oh, that's the place without a doctor." The most memorable display of concern was in 1954 when Dr. Charles F. Gladstone retired after nearly forty years of service. A great appeal was made, but not successful, and the Island still does not have a resident doctor. In considering the isolation of the Island, its being designated a health provider shortage area, and its having so few people, Tangier has been remarkably fortunate with the medical care that it has received for the last eighty years.

Dr. Gladstone, trained as a pharmacist and a medical doctor, came to Tangier in 1918, stayed through the Depression and World War II, and longer, until 1956, two years after his retirement in 1954. Not only did the Islanders receive good care, but they were a privileged lot to have known what must have been one of the most unselfish and giving doctors anywhere. As the Islanders tell it, Dr. Gladstone for routine care collected twenty-five cents a month for each member of the family, with a minimum of one dollar and a maximum of two. Depending upon their preference, they could pay weekly or monthly. For the fee, he would see them as often as they wished; however, whether sick or not, they were held responsible for the fee. He apparently never refused treatment for anyone who could not pay, even those who at times ignored payments even when they had the money. This practice could very well have been the earliest prepaid health plan in Virginia.

Dr. Mikio Kato came in 1957 and served until 1959. From this year until 1969 three doctors in succession served the Island, each for brief periods. Since then the Island has been without a permanent or resident doctor. In 1957 the Islanders built a health center, which in more recent years has been modernized and renamed appropriately the Gladstone Memorial Health Center. It is taken care of by a local registered nurse, Jean Crockett, who acts as a home health care provider. Since 1969 the Island has been served, moreover, by mainland doctors who visit twice a week and hold office hours to provide care. One of the three doctors, Richard Andrews, and a nurse, Wanda Custis, from the Eastern Shore Rural Health System, fly over to provide care on Thursdays. They are supported by two other registered nurses from Tangier.

Emergencies are not the problem they used to be on Tangier, but its isolation and the weather can be a problem in some cases. An example, perhaps, is the recent incident when a young mother and her newborn child both perished before they reached the hospital. As a rule, serious cases are airlifted by helicopter to mainland hospitals. When needed, local boats, the Coast Guard, and the Maryland State Police can assist. Those requiring special appointments

and services usually take the mail boat or whatever boat may be available to the mainland, and from there they go by car to wherever they need to go. Few have health insurance and normally pay in cash if they have it. If not, they can make use of the Rural Health System, which, as a federally funded project, offers a sliding-fee scale. Most who provide care for the Islanders know that they are at times financially strapped but are impressed by their determination to pay their bills and are quick to report that the Islanders are deeply appreciative of what is done for them.

PART III
Talk

7

Overview

TANGIER ISLANDERS ARE DIFFERENT FROM MOST PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY have had to learn to work and live together on a small speck of land and marsh in relative isolation. Up to this point, I have looked at their historical and social origins, their ways of life, and those elements that have shaped them as a unique community. Now, I will look closely at the way they talk and consider how their way of talking relates to other varieties of English.

As is well known by now, Tangier is a remote community, perhaps among the remotest in the country, but not the product of a single, remote development. Perhaps one needs to be reminded that the Islanders, too, are Anglo-Saxon, Virginian, American, and among that great tradition called the Western Civilization. Except for a family or two with other connections, they come from British stock, not from a single place or shire, but from many. More than likely they are derived from the servant or indentured classes. As I will argue later, their ancestors on this soil may not have traveled the traditionally accepted path of Jamestown to Accomack and then west to the Island in the seventeenth century. For the way they talk today, we must not settle on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but on the nineteenth century some time before or around the Civil War as the formative period. What became the speech of the Islanders of that time has lasted until now, with changes, of course, basically in vocabulary where names for things have changed or become remote because of technological and social change. I seriously doubt whether there has been significant change in pronunciation, expression, and usage since that time because my findings and those made by Guy Lowman in the 1930s from two informants who were 76 and 85 years old[1] were remarkably close. The speech of these informants certainly must have had a formative basis way back in the nineteenth century.

Not much is known about the exact nature of American English in the eighteenth century, but few would question that around the

last quarter of that century, perhaps even earlier, American English had started to diverge from British English. Such a statement can be troublesome, for one may conclude that there was only one variety of British English and one of American English, which, it goes without saying, is not true. As we know, many varieties of English were spoken on both sides of the ocean. It is necessary to make clear, furthermore, that all varieties of American English are derived from, and have historical roots in, the varieties of British English. Then, when American and British relations were severed by war, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, changes in the way both spoke ultimately took place, and those changes that developed in each were not necessarily shared by the other, nor was there a uniformity of change in all varieties.

Let me hasten to add at this very point that these varieties apparently had tended to move in different directions before this period because some British visitors earlier had unkind things to say about American English, even though a few felt that the English spoken in this country was superior to that in England. From then until now, popular opinion seems to suggest that American English is inferior to British English. It is foolish, of course, to make such statements. The most one can say is that they are different. In fact, in the process of divergence, in some ways present-day American English is more conservative than present-day British English. Since the split, for example, American English has generally retained the "r" sound in words like *cart* and *arm* and the flat "a" sound of *bath* and *ask* whereas British English typically drops the "r" in *cart* and *arm* and pronounces the "a" in *bath* and *ask* with the vowel of *father*. The British forms are relatively new developments, and the American ones are preservations of older forms in these instances, as they are in many areas of Northern England today.

Since the shorelines of the Chesapeake Bay "cradled" the first settlements, it was, as commonly thought, the locus of shaping distinctive social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics that eventually blended with those of other centers along the Atlantic slope—namely, Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston—to determine just what this new land would become and how the newcomers would live and talk. The blend that resulted was somewhat unique, "American," but not that smooth and complete; for, though "American," each of the major settlement areas continued to possess rather distinctive social, cultural, and speech characteristics. Even within these major settlement areas diversity endured and prevailed, the degree of which was determined by life choices, local habits, and isolation. By 1640, about six

thousand settlers lived along the Chesapeake Bay. Colonial Chesapeake was supported by farming, chiefly tobacco, and by the labor of indentured servants, some of whom came as such and others who, after a while, chose to be such for survival. It was, of course, predominantly English and, though close to becoming landed gentry, many or most were of lower middle- and lower-class origins.

A part of this picture—and also apart from it—is Tangier Island, whose people speak a kind of English that can be called "distinctive" and one that has variously been called "corrupted English," "a bastardized English," "quaint English," and "Elizabethan English," none of which applies. An important aspect of every group of people is the way they talk, whether they themselves think so or not. It invades every segment of their lives. Some people sustain a pride in their speech whether they speak the standard variety or a rural isolated form of it. Some isolated groups are fiercely independent and think that there are no other lives and variety of speech than their very own. Some apply this comment to the Cockney; however, it is not true of Tangier Islanders.

The Islanders are painfully aware that the way they talk is different—even bad, as they say—from the speech of the surrounding areas and seem to be ashamed of their speech in front of strangers. They are, of course, essentially nonstandard speakers. They do waver, however, when they are on guard. In speaking with outsiders, they consciously modify a feature or two, those that they feel are the most conspicuous to others, toward that of the standard, an act for which they teasingly accuse each other, either at the time or later, of "putting on airs" or "talking proper." Visitors who stay only two or three hours often go away amused by the strange speech they hear. The speech of Tangier is a variety of Eastern Virginia English that differs notably from that of the surrounding areas and of its most contiguous neighbors on the eastern shores of Virginia and Maryland. The difference is noticeable in grammar, word forms, and vocabulary, but most recognizable and distinctive in pronunciation. Sounds, words, phrases, and sentences are marked by an unusual tenseness, emphasis, and prolongation—that is, they sound longer and louder. These, plus the Islanders' curious mixture of double negatives, clipping, slang, nicknames, stated opposites—"talking backwards," as they call it—can be at first baffling to an outsider.

There is a total lack of the several commonly listed distinctive features of Eastern Virginia speech, some of which are now thought of as old-fashioned but are still heard in the Piedmont and Tidewater dialects. I am, of course, referring to the "broad a," or the "Cav-

alier a," as in *aunt*, *pasture*, and *rather*, which are pronounced with the vowel of *father*; the insertion of the "y" in such words as *car*, *Carter*, and *garden*, giving us the pronunciation of "cyar," "Cyarter," and "gyarden"; the dropping of the "r" in words like *cart* and *March*, as some New Englanders pronounce them; the pronunciation of words like *dinner* as "dinna;" the use of the vowel of *bed* in words like *afraid* and *naked*, resulting in "afred" and "neked"; the use of the vowel of *bad* in *yes;* and the pronunciation of *home* and *room* with the vowel of *rum*. The rustic pronunciations of *can't* as "caint," *push* as "poosh," *dog* as "doeg," *kick* as "keek," *fish* as "feesh," and *four* as "fo" that one finds common in folk speech along the Bay are not heard on the Island.

Tangier speakers do not distinguish *hoarse* and *horse*, *mourning* and *morning*, and *poor*, *pour*, and *pore*—all of which have the vowel of *door*. *Mary* and *merry* are the same and pronounced like "Murray." They say "far" for *fire* and "tard" for *tired*. They say "chur" for *chair*, "cur" for *care*, "skerd" for *scared*, and "quare" for *queer*. *Paul* and *ball* sound like *pull* and *bull*. *Wine* and *whine* are pronounced the same, with "w"s omitting the "h." *Since* and *sense* have the same sound, that of the latter, and *pin* and *pen*, the sound of "bin." *Steal* and *still* have the same vowel, that of the latter. *Year*, *hear*, *here*, and *ear* are all pronounced as "yer." They say "krik" for *creek*, "led" for *lid*, "court" for *quart*, "bum" for *bomb*, and "tusde" instead of "toosday" for *Tuesday*. Depending on its use, *calm* is either "kolm" or "kaem." Finally, the Islanders use "zinc" for *sink*, "rench" for *rinse*, "spider" for *frying pan*, "coal oil" for *kerosene*, "bateau" for *skiff*, "flystickers" for *flypaper*, "wavering" for *waving* and "curtains" for *shades*. Tangier speech, then, seems to be a mixture, sharing some special features of the speech of the Middle Atlantic States, the southern mountain area, the southern coastal plain, the outermost communities of the Atlantic seaboard, and the major and minor dialect areas of Virginia. This mixture and the vowel sounds set Tangier off as having a marked and distinctive dialect—one that off-islanders, especially eager journalists, frequently, but mistakenly, describe as "quaint, old-fashioned, and Elizabethan."

8
Pronunciation

Vowels in Stressed Syllables

All varieties of American English share the same number and system of consonant sounds, except, it must be noted, for some of those along the Atlantic seaboard and in some other Southern regions, where they tend to drop "r's" after vowels. The same can be said for the vowels, but it is obvious to anyone familiar with American speech that the Southern type of American pronunciation is more varied than that of any other region. Tangier Islanders share this systems of vowels, but of the various regional pronunciations, they stand somewhat apart, even from the Southern region, in the way they pronounce these sounds. The most noticeable aspect of Tangier speech is the quality of the vowels as they are pronounced in stressed syllables, those under full stress (prominence given in speech to a syllable or word that makes it stand out) or in single-syllable words, *car* and *that* for example. The treatment of vowels, the most prominent and central sounds of syllables, is difficult to do by using the traditional alphabetic letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* because English has more vowel sounds than vowel letters in the alphabet. To be precise requires a phonetic script with a one-to-one correspondence of symbols and sounds, but such a set of symbols would be hard for a lay reader to interpret. Using approximate spellings or alphabetic representations lacks precision and causes other problems. To compromise to make matters easier, I will use a combination of alphabetic representations with key words and rhyming words. It is important to keep in mind that no representation is an absolute description; the best that can be done is to try to describe the vowel sounds in relation to other vowel sounds as they are produced. At this point, it may be useful for the reader to refer to the Pronunciation Chart on the next page.

Pronunciation Guide

eɪay----------vowel *day*
æ ae----------vowel of *cat*
æə*aeae-------vowel of *bad* prolonged
ɔah ---------vowel of *father*
aɪ*ah-i--------vowel of *buy*
aɪ*ah-ee -----vowel of *buy* prolonged
aʊ*ah-oo -----vowel of *our*
ə uh ---------vowel of *cub*
ɔɪ*uh-i -------vowel of Outer Banks *ice*
əi*uh-ee -----vowel of Tangier *beach*
ɛ eh ---------vowel of *bet*
ɪ ih ----------vowel of *fish*
i ee----------vowel of *beet*
ʊ oo----------vowel of *who*
ɔɪoy----------vowel of *boy*
ju u----------vowel of *puke*

*Pronounce quickly as a prolonged gliding sound.

Apart from these representations, rhymes and other alphabetic spellings are used to make readings easier.

What is most conspicuous is the marked lengthening or prolonging of the vowels (sometimes with a changing sound beginning with one vowel and moving to another within one syllable) as in *high*, pronounced "h-ah-ee," the frequency of *r*-coloring (a prominent -*r* sound) of vowels, as in *sir*, *fur*, and *her*, pronounced with the vowel of *bird* with energy; and the pronunciation of words like *beach* and *set*, normally pronounced by most Americans so that they would rhyme with *peach* and *pet* respectively, but by Tangier speakers as "b-uh-ee-ch" and "sed-uh-t," starting with one sound and gliding to another. The prominence of the sounds depends on such features as emphasis and emotional context. Though other variations occur, the great majority of these vowels involve the sound represented here alphabetically as *uh*, which can occur either before or after the main vowel, as in *about* and *sofa*. As a matter of fact, a significant thing about the Tangier vowels is that they are pronounced with such an intensity (normally louder and longer) that one seems to be hearing two syllables and gets the im-

pression of Cockney-like drawling and whining, almost as if the sounds are going to "continue as long as the speaker can breathe."[1]

Let me begin with the vowels in words like *crib* and *bit*. Instead of a single-syllable pronunciation, rhyming with *rib*, as it is generally pronounced, in Tangier speech the pronunciation seems to have two syllables, sounding something like "cr-ih-uh-b," with the first part sounding like the vowel of *pick* and the second, like the vowel of *cub*.

A conspicuous pronunciation in Tangier speech is the vowel in the words *bulge*, *bulk*, *doll*, *ball*, *Paul*, and *full*. *Bulge* and *bulk* have the vowel of "bull," sounding like "bullge" and "bullk." *Ball* and *bull* are pronounced the same, sounding alike with the pronunciation of the latter. Likewise, *doll*, *Paul*, and *fall* have the vowel sounds of "dole," "pull," and "full," respectively. This occurrence, of course, is not unique to Tangier, for it occurs certainly in localities in Australia and England up and down the social scale—and perhaps elsewhere. I was curious to find out whether this feature occurred in Cornwall and Cockney English, since both of these varieties of English had been mentioned in reference to Tangier speech. Neither Martyn Wakelin in his study of Cornwall English[2] nor Peter Wright in his study of Cockney[3] has references to these series of words. Many times I have heard sportcasters from Australia and England announcing American sports events pronounce *ball* as "bull," however.

Noticeable also in Tangier speech is the vowel of *set*, *dress*, and *Beth*, which occurs with a prolonged sound: "s-eh-uh-t," "dr-eh-uh-s," and "b-eh-uh-th." What is most interesting about this sound is that, for most Tangier speakers, it shows up in some unexpected places and becomes something else in others. Words like *brush*, *hush*, *touch*, *shut* and *such*, which generally have the vowel "uh" of *cub*, are commonly pronounced among the older Islanders with the vowel of *fresh*, giving us "bresh," "hesh," "tech," "shet," and "sech." Moreover, anyone hanging around the docks in the Tangier harbor is going to hear "drudge" for *dredge* and "marsh" for *mesh*. *Length* and *strength* have the vowel of "stray." The variations "lenth" and "strenth," common all over and among all classes, do not occur in Island speech. *Kettle* is pronounced "kittle." The words *head* and *dead* pronounced with the vowel *day*—that is, sounding like the rustic "haid" and "daid," do not occur in Tangier speech, as they do in other such communities.

A striking feature of Tangier speech is the treatment of the vowel typically found in words like *bat*, *bad*, *sack*, *dance*, *glass*, *crabs*, *sap*, *half*, and *patch*. No matter the consonant following the vowel, it is

pronounced the same way: prolonged and glided as in "b-aeae-uh-t" for *bat* and "cr-aeae-uh-bs" for *crabs*.

A most distinctive pronunciation of this vowel in *bat* is its presence before "-sh" as in *ashes*; "-g," *bag*; "-nk," *tank*; and "-r," *hair*. Generally, "ae" of *bat* occurs in these words. Let me begin with *ashes* and other words like it: *trash*, *cash*, *hash*, *ration*, and the second syllable of *moustache*. All these words have the vowel of *day* or the pronunciation of the letter "a," followed by an intensifying (longer and louder) sound: "ay-ee-shes," "tr-ay-ee-sh," "c-ay-ee-sh," "h-ay-ee-sh," "r-ay-ee-shun" and "mus-tay-ee-sh." This pronunciation seems to be peculiar to Tangier. At a meeting of the American Dialect Society, I asked the members, from all over the United States and some from Canada, whether they had encountered this feature. The response was negative, and the opinion was that its development could be an innovation or some kind of change in progress. A review of British sources and correspondence with two fieldworkers of the *Survey of English Dialects*[4] produced the same response. Also conspicuous is the sound of this vowel before *g* in words like *bag* and *tag*, which are pronounced "b-ay-eeg" and "t-ay-eeg." Moreover, *bank* and *tank* are pronounced as "b-ay-eenk" and "t-ay-eenk." Words like *hair*, *stairs*, *there*, *tear* and *parents*, hard to represent alphabetically, have strong *r*-coloring (a prominent *r* sound) and seem to have a sound between that of "haer" and "har," certainly not that of the Appalachian "thar." It is interesting to point out that *chair*, *care*, *scared* and *scarce*, which generally rhyme with *hair*, all have the vowel of *purr*: "churr," "curr," "scurred," and "scurrce."

The vowel of words like *crop*, *box*, and *hard* generally has the "ah" of *father*, but in Tangier speech it is more prolonged than in most American dialects, sounding something like "cr-ah-uh-p." When the "ah" occurs before "-sh," however, as in *gosh* and *wash*, it has a changing sound (or two sounds) as in *die*, giving us "guy-ee-sh" and "why-ee-sh." Furthermore, words typically ending in "r" or "l" and preceded by the vowel of the word *die*, such as *wire* and *file*, have the "ah" sound of *father* resulting in "tar" for *tire*, "plarers" for *pliers*, "war" for *wire*, "far" for *fire*; "whal" for *while*, "fal" for *file*, and "mal" for *mile*. The pronunciation of *far* and *for* has traditionally been the same, "fur," words among several others that Tangiermen have most conspicuously and consciously changed to the standard when speaking with strangers or tourists. "Fur" for *for*, however, seems to be dying out.

Another noticeable pronunciation is the vowel in words like *beach*, *three*, *see*, or *sea*, and *be*, which we are apt to hear as "uh-

ee," where the nucleus sound "ee" is preceded by an "uh" sound: "b-uh-ee-ch," "thr-uh-ee," "s-uh-ee," and "b-uh-ee," the representation of which, as cautioned earlier (in the Pronunciation Chart), must be pronounced rapidly. Words with "ee" before "l," such as *feel*, *steal*, *heal*, and *peal* usually in Tangier speech rhyme with *fill*, *still*, *hill*, and *pill*, respectively, making them sound alike. An isolated difference, and an important one in describing the Tangier dialect, is the pronunciation of *creek*, which generally is heard to rhyme with *peak*, as "crik," with the vowel of *pick*, which is traditionally considered without social cleavage, a Northern and Western rather than a Southern form, where it is considered by some rustic or folk usage. Thought to be of American origin, the "crik" pronunciation has received a good bit of prejudice, despite its currency in some states of the regions just mentioned. The *Dictionary of American English* (DAE) traces it to Captain John Smith's "Newes from Virginia," which alone should suggest that it did not originate on these shores. In fact, the word in the forms *crike*, *crek*, *cryke*, and *krike* is listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), likely proof that its origin predates Jamestown.

The vowel of *Tuesday*, *tube*, *new*, *due*, *dues*, *dew*, and *Duke* are pronounced to rhyme with "puke," placing it within good Southern tradition and contrasting with the Northern, excluding the Boston area, form of "toosday," "toob," "noo," "doo," "doos," and "Dook." A variant of this vowel in final position in words like *two*, *you*, *shoe* and *who* rhymes with "toot," and if under heavy stress or emphasis seems to acquire an "*l*" sound, making the words rhyme with *tool*. The same can be said for *spew*, *chew*, and *new*—that is, with regard to the addition of the final "*l*."

The vowel of *day*, *eight*, *ways*, and *break* tends to be pronounced much longer and more intensely than in other areas, resulting in "d-ay-ee" "ay-ee-t," "w-ay-ee-s," and "br-ay-ee-k." There are alternative pronunciations of these words, with an "uh" preceding the nucleus sound: "d-uh-ay-ee," "a-uh -ay-ee-t," "w-uh-ay-ees," and "br-uh-ay-ee-k." As an isolated difference, it may be of interest to know that the word *drain* is pronounced "drean," but with a preceding "uh" sound: "dr-uh-ee-n."

Another striking feature in the Tangier dialect is the pronunciation of the vowel in words such as *light*, *twice*, *wife*, *five*, *china*, *time*, and *tide*, commonly called the "long i" of *buy*. The Tangier pronunciation of this vowel is something like "ah-ee," with more prolonging and intensity. A variant of this is "uh-ee," that one hears along the Outer Banks of North Carolina and in a few communities in coastal Virginia, such as Poquoson, Messick, and Gloucester

Point, or "Guinea neck," and probably in other similar communities in both Virginia and North Carolina. Though "ah-i" of *line* was rare in Shakespeare's English, not the only variety in England at the time, "uh-i" of *loin* was widespread. That *boy* and *die* rhymed is not certain, but that *die* and *joy* and *annoy* did is clear.[5] Today in England, "ah-i" is regularly used in some areas, but the common form or variant is "uh-i,"[6] and there should be no surprise that it is used in some areas of the United States. Of interest is the following observation by Peter Wright about these variants in Cockney:

> This sound had changed right back in the seventeenth century, for early London documents included spellings such as *ploying* for "playing" [with the /ai/ sound] in 1614 and *Hoye* "high" in 1633. However, these spellings are a trifle deceptive. In 1822 D'Orsey wrote that in Cockney "*light* is almost *loyt*," and Ellis agreed that it reached *ah-i* but that he himself had not observed an actual *oi*. Very occasionally I hear full *oi* but easily the commonest today also is ah-i.[7]

In the words listed initially (*light*, *twice*, *wife*, *fine*, *china*, *time*, and *tide*), the Tangier treatment of the sound is quite different from the others. Instead of "uh-i" and even "ah-i," Tangier has "ah-ee" with great emphasis, for example: "l-ah-ee-t," "t-ah-ee-m," and "t-ah-ee-d." A curious pronunciation of *gosh* and *wash* is the Tangier "g-ah-ee-sh" and "w-ah-ee-sh," cited above. Moreover, *joint*, *point*, and *hoist* have the common sounds of *jint*, *pint* and *hist*.

In sum, then, in some of the outermost communities of the Atlantic slope, to include Martha's Vineyard and others along the Maine coast in addition to those already mentioned, this "two sound" vowel, variants of which are "ah-ee" and "uh-ee," seems to be a distinctive feature. The latter variant is clearly a characteristic feature of the Ocracoke dialect, even perhaps of all the isolated communities along the Carolina coast. The Tangier variant, "ah-ee" plus strong emphasis, seems to be more restricted, perhaps even exclusively to Tangier. However, let me propose a hypothetical situation. Suppose that one could arrange to have one or two watermen from each of the following communities, Kittery, Martha's Vineyard, Chincoteague, Tangier Island, Smith Island, Messick, Guinea, Poquoson, Hatteras, Ocracoke, Salter Path and Harkers Island, all standing on a dock talking about a day's catch or the varying techniques and devices of their business and then position oneself within earshot of them. Do you think that a bystander could detect speech differences among the group? My guess is that one would at first have difficulty distinguishing the features under dis-

cussion and would think that the speakers were all from the same village, but the closer one got and the longer one stayed, one could begin to hear some differences.

Another important feature of Tangier speech is its treatment of the vowel in words such as *out*, *mouth*, *now*, *sound*, *loud*, and *down*, which in Virginia, contrary to popular knowledge, has several variations, neither of which is easy to represent without phonetic symbols. Only three are relevant here. The first, represented alphabetically, is "ah-oo," thus "ah-oot" for *out*. This has been described as the most uncharacteristic of Virginia speech, and probably the most general in the United States. The second is "uh-oo," found in *house* and *out*, as "h-uh-oos" and "uh-oot," not the Anglo-Saxon *hus* pronounced "hoose." The third is "aeh-oo" in words like *now*, *down*, and *sound*. The "ah-oo" sound, though "uncharacteristic of Virginia speech," was found in Loudoun County, a German settlement near Maryland.[8] What is more, variants of this feature are found on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, but only the "ah-oo" in all the words listed above was found on Tangier, according to my investigation and the field records of Guy Lowman. The "ah-oo" variant in *now*, *down*, and *sound* with the first element of the vowel sounding like that of *man* and *dan*, and the second, that of *full* is widespread, which means that *now* sounds like "n-ae-ow," *down*, like "d-ae-own," and *sound* like "s-ae-ound." This variant does not occur in Tangier speech, as one would likely expect. The Tangier variety is not as fronted, or "flattened," as this variety and sounds something like "n-uh-ow," "d-uh-own," and "s-uh-own," which has some currency in northeastern North Carolina and on the Outer Banks at all social levels.

Vowels in Final Unstressed Syllables

Another marked feature of the speech of the Tangier Islanders is the way they pronounce the vowels in final syllables of weakest stress, specifically those that end in "ow" or "o" in *widow* and "ah" as in *extra*. Perhaps I should mention that the reduction and even deletion of vowels—whether they occur initially, medially, or finally—are and have been very common among standard and nonstandard speakers of English and among the British as well as Americans. The reduction and deletion of vowel sounds, we must remember, have been a part of the regular English pronunciation way before Shakespeare and even Chaucer. For centuries speakers of English have pronounced, and still do, *descent* as "da-scent,"

mistake as "ma-stake," *temperance* as "temp'rance," *separate* as "sep'rate," *pastoral* as "past'ral," *extravagant* as "-stravagant," and *pillow* and *extra* as "piller" and "extry." Thus, it is not new, and at one time or another, has come from the mouths of the high and low. However, distinctions have to be made. All the words referenced above, except *pillow* and *extra*, are and have been uttered, as indicated, by both the educated and uneducated. Those excluded from the first group, *pillow* and *extra* pronounced as "piller" and "extry," are more likely to be found in uneducated or folk speech.

Allow me now to focus on those words that end in "ow" or "o" and "a." For words ending in "ow" or "o," Tangier speakers generally use "-er," the sound of the vowel in *bird*. "Er," instead of "ow," will appear in *shadow*, *shallow*, *swallow*, *wallow*, *pillow*, *window*, and *follow*. *Bristow*, a fairly common surname nearby, is pronounced by the Islanders "Brister." These pronunciations, as a rule, are not sporadic. Even those taking a suffix, such as *yellowish*, *wallowing*, *swallowing* and *fellowship* will have "-er" instead of "ow," as does *swallow it*. The word *yellow* may alternate as "yeller" or "yella." *Minnow* is treated differently also in that it has been recorded as "minni," a pronunciation that is very rare today, if present at all. Others such as *tobacco*, *piano*, *potato*, and *mosquito* are all traditionally pronounced as "-backer," "pianer," "-tater," and "-skeeter." Noticeable, of course, is that the first syllable of *tobacco*, *potato*, and *mosquito* is deleted. *Tomato* generally occurs without loss of the first syllable, but instead of "-er" as a final syllable, it has "uh," that is, "tomat-uh," which is, of course, the general pronunciation.

Words ending in final unstressed "o" or "ow" preceded by an "r" sound deserve special mention. All these, except *borrow*, to which I will return, end with the final sound of "sofa." *Wheelbarrow* and *tomorrow* are good examples: "wheel-bare-uh" and "to-mor-uh." The Tangier treatment of them is interesting. What is usual for these words is "wheelbar" and "tomor." More often than not, "mor" or "mora" are used for *tomorrow*. *Arrow*, *sparrow*, and *narrow* usually occur with "a" for "ow," but at times one may think that he hears a weakly-colored "r" sound for the final syllable, which results in "arr*er*," "sparr*er*," and "narr*er*." Of interest is that "barrers," "sparrers," "narrer," and "winders" have been recorded for *barrows*, *sparrows*, *narrow*, and *windows* in Cockney.[9] And now consider *borrow*, which has three pronunciations, "o," "a," and "ee" in American English. All are widespread, with "o" common

among the educated and the most fastidious, "ah" among the educated, and "ee" among the less or uneducated, commonly called the "folk" group. "Borree" is characteristic of Southern speech as folk usage and may occur among the middle class group, but is rare in the speech of "the careful" or "the educated." It is not only present in Southern speech but also in that of the southeastern parts of Maine—Kittery Point, for example—and nearby New Hampshire.[10] Whether *borrow* ends in "ee," with the vowel of *seat* or with the vowel of *sit* is hard at times to determine. In *I borrowed it*, I hear "ow" with the vowel of *sit*, and in *I'm gonna borrow it* and in *What did you go and borrow*, I hear the vowel of *seat*.

Now let me turn to the words ending in final unstressed "uh," among which are *extra*, *sofa*, and *china*. The typical ending in these is *a* of *Stella*, but in uneducated folk usage the vowel of *seat* is common and has been around for a very long time. *Extra* pronounced as "extry" occurs in Shakespeare's plays and at the time was thought of "as a vulgar and dialectal form."[11] "Sofy" and "chiny" for *sofa* and *china*, respectively, are still found in parts of England and in regions of the South, particularly in the Appalachians. Although I have never heard these forms on Tangier, they were recorded in the thirties, but from two elderly people, which may mean that they were relics of the distant past. Several older language-conscious people told me that they had never heard "sofy" and "chiny" on Tangier. "Extry" for *extra* is common today for all ages.

Santa in *Santa Claus* is reduced to "Santy" or San-ee." For forms like *kinda* (kind of), *wanta* (want to), and *useta* (used to), the Islanders regularly use a clearly pronounced variation of the vowel sound of *seat*: "kindee," "wantee," and "usetee" respectively. Proper names such as *Sarah*, *Bella*, *Hannah*, *Martha*, and *Stella* are, however, pronounced in standard fashion. Forms like *doncha* (don't you) and *didcha* (did you) almost invariably show a strongly pronounced "ee" as the final sound, as I hear them. Finally, in place names ending in *a* of *sofa*, such as *Russia*, *Alabama*, *Carolina*, *Florida*, and *Louisiana*, the pronunciation of the final syllable is standard. From the records of the thirties, I found, however, that *Florida* was pronounced as "Floridy" and *Louisiana* as "Louisaner."[12] Interesting, however, is that *Urbanna* and *Saluda*, two place names nearby, are pronounced as "-Banner" and "-Sluder," and, as is evident, with the loss of the initial syllables—another characteristic of Tangier speech, to be covered later.

Change, Loss, Addition, and Alternation of Sounds

We have already seen some instances of the alternation and modification of speech sounds. Here I will return to some items that have been previously discussed and work them in with change, loss, and addition of sounds for a sharper focus on these processes as they have taken place in the speech of Tangier Islanders. Many years ago, it was generally thought that language differences were due to sporadic change; then it was suggested that regularity ruled linguistic change; and now most believe that change, though inexorable, is gradual and at times uneven and takes place in one group and spreads to other groups. Some call this "change in progress" and describe it as happening slowly or rapidly and differently among social or regional groups and varying from one generation to the other. It accounts for the differences and variations one hears in the language or dialect spoken. The speech of Tangier Island, a relic area, is a good illustration. I will begin with vowels before "l."

Vowels before "l"

In American dialects, when vowels occur in syllables followed by "l," different things happen. Sometimes, the "l" is lost—for example, in *folk*, *salmon*, *palm*, *calm*, and *yolk*, words that we usually pronounce as "fok," "saemon," "pahm," "cahm," and "yoke." In Tangier speech, the "l" is seldom, if ever, lost in these words. It is strong in all positions and before all vowels. One notable exception is in the word *calm*: when the Islanders speak of the rivers or Bay as being "calm," they call it "caem." If they strove to be proper, however, they would say *calm* with the "l." In other usage, such as "calm down," I have never heard "caem," however. As far as I know, "hep" and "sef," as in "help yourself," common in much folk usage, do not occur in the speech of the Islanders. Yet in *bulb*, we hear the word without the "l."

In words like *steal*, *heal*, *peal*, *keel*, *feel*, and *wheel*, which usually occur with "ee," the vowel of *beat*, we hear the vowel of *pit*, which makes *steal* and *still*, *heal* and *hill*, *peal* and *pill*, *keel* and *kill*, and *wheel* and *will sound the same*. Before "l," in words such as *mail*, *pail*, *gale*, and *sail*, the vowel, with the sound of *day*, changes to "ae," the vowel of *cat*, making *pail* and *pal*, *mail* and *Mal*, *gale* and *gal*, *sail* and *Sal* (Sally) the same. Also conspicuous in Tangier speech is the pronunciation of *ball* as "bull," *Paul* as "pull," *fall* as

"full," *wall* as "wool." Moreover, *call*, *gall*, *Baltimore*, *somersault*, *squall*, *gulf*, *wolf*, *golf*, and *salt* are all pronounced with the vowel of "bull." Finally, words like *mild*, *file*, *tile*, *pile*, *mile*, and *while* tend to have vowels something like that of the first syllable of "Bali," a province of Indonesia.

Vowels before "r"

As is well known, English accents, both British and American, can be distinguished on the basis of their retaining or dropping the "r" sound after vowels. The incidence of "r" and the degree of "r"-coloring of vowels varies regionally and socially in both countries. Historically, the "r" in words like *far*, *rather*, and *dinner* was dropped in the South, Metropolitan New York, and Eastern New England. The loss of "r" for a long time predominated in the Virginia Piedmont, the Coastal Plain, or Tidewater, as defined earlier. The presence of this feature is not as clear as it once was. When it clearly characterized these regions and others along the Atlantic Seaboard, those outermost communities of these regions were in the use of "r" quite different from the states they were geographically a part of. Tangier Islanders, for example, as far as one can tell, have always retained the "r" after vowels in words like those above. Today in Tidewater Virginia the speech tends toward the use of "r" after vowels, except in the speech of some older cultivated Virginians. My guess is that even the younger members of the "well-born" families of Eastern Virginia would today look upon "r"-lessness as a bit old-fashioned, though it persists. Tangier speakers today, as years ago, have "r" in all positions, and because of the particular qualities of the vowels before "r," they require special consideration. Let me preface this by saying that all the vowels before "r" are pronounced with energy, longer and louder.

Ear, *here*, *hear*, and *year*, all of which generally have the vowel of *hit*, sound alike in Tangier speech and are pronounced with the vowel of *bird*, that is, "yer." Moreover, *queer*, *clear*, *bleary*, and *dreary* have the same vowel and sound like "kwer," sometimes "kwaer," "cler," "blery," and "drery" respectively. Words typically with the vowel of *bet* before "r" of two syllables (*Mary*, *merry*, *cherry*, *dairy*, *mirror*, *syrup*) are pronounced also with the vowel of "bird" as "Mery," "mery," "chery," "dery," "mera," and "serup." Words with the vowel of *bat* before "r," such as *bear*, *stairs*, *their*, *where*, *hair*, and *fair*, are pronounced without any glide at all. *Bear*, for example, would be pronounced as "baer." The stressed syllables

of *marry* and *carry* would have "maer" and "caer" respectively. In the Tangier dialect, the vowel exists somewhere between the vowel of *bat* and that of *far*, definitely not "bar," nor "whar" or "har," spellings often rendered to characterize Appalachian dialects. Other words with the vowel of *bat* before *"r"*, such as *care*, *scarce*, *scared*, *chair*, and *share* are pronounced with the vowel of *burr*, resulting in "cur," "scurce," "scurred," "chur," and "shur." Often, *where* and *there* can be heard also as "whur" and "thur."

In words like *car*, the vowel remains distinct and prolonged, and the "r" takes on the vowel sound of *bird* prolonged, sounding like two syllables. *Yard*, *marsh*, *tar*, *bark*, *barn*, and *scar* are respectively pronounced as "yar-erd," "mar-ersh," "tar-er," "bar-erk," "bar-ern," and "scar-er." Words with the vowel of *boat* and *caught* before "r" occur with the sound of the latter. *Poor*, *oranges*, *horse*, *wore*, *oar*, *porch*, and *gorge* are pronounced as "por-er," "orn-ges," "hor-ers," "wor-er," "or-er," "por-erch," "gor-erge." This means, of course, that *poor*, *pore*, and *pour* sound alike as do *horse* and *hoarse* and *mourning* and *morning*. Finally, words like *wire*, *tire*, *tired*, and *fire* are pronounced as if one is hearing two syllables: "war-er," "tar-er," 'tar-erd," and "far-er." *Pirate* and *pliars* are pronounced "par-it" and "plar-ers," respectively.

Vowels before "n"

The pronouncing of words like *pin* and *pen* with the vowel of the former is very common in the Southern part of the United States as it is in some areas of Great Britain. In *pen,* and in *ten*, *fence*, *sense*, and *twenty*, the tendency is to use the vowel of *pin*, which for some words such as *pin* and *pen*, *since* and *sense*, *tin* and *ten*, and *thin* and *then,* we have pairs that sound the same. There seems to be some dispute about whether the lack of contrast between such words occurs on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Robert Howren in his study of the dialect of Ocracoke observed that Ocracoke "aligns itself less frequently with that of the coastal South than with the systems typical of the other major dialects."[13] For *any* and *penny*, however, he showed the vowel of *pin*. Lucia C. Morgan, earlier than Howren, called attention to how strong the occurrence of the vowel of *pin* for *pen* is in North Carolina as in other Southern states, but she noted that "surprisingly enough it does not occur with marked frequency on the Outer Banks Islands."[14] However, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes observed that "the conflation of *ih* and *eh*" is such that "*pin* and *pen* sometimes come out sounding

the same."[15] All of Lowman's transcriptions in the two records he made on Tangier in the thirties showed a clear distinction in *pin* and *pen* and other similar words. My experience with Tangier speech, as a student of the dialect and "as family," is different. For most of my life, I have heard "straight pin" and "fountain pin." If, however, Morgan and Lowman are right about this contrast, I would be very pleased because it would be another strong example of how these outermost Atlantic communities differ from coastal mainland communities.

Vowels before "-sh"

Earlier, I noted that Tangier Islanders do not usually use *feesh* and *deesh* for *fish* and *dish*, as one might find in folk usage in some other Bay communities. Morgan, as did Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, reports *feesh* for *fish* and *deesh* for *dish* for the Outer Banks, but Howren found these as "alternating rather freely."[16] As far as I know, the Guinea Neck and Poquoson villages are like Tangier in using *fish* and *dish*. This is not to say that one is not likely to hear these contrasts there at all. Let me hasten to add that Lowman's records of Tangier have six transcriptions of *dish*, all of which are "dish," not "deesh."

Aunt

In most of Virginia, in *aunt*, the vowel of *bat* or *ant* prevails. In Tidewater Virginia, the dominant form is *aunt* with the vowel of *flaunt*. This usage is strong in the Piedmont as well. This is generally true of both African Americans and Whites, of urban and rural areas, and of the educated and uneducated. For a long time, *aunt* has been thought of as a prestigious form in Tidewater Virginia and nearby localities in northeastern North Carolina.[17] Today, this is not so, and I am not sure that it has ever been. Most people outside this area may consider it as such, but those native to the area probably feel that it is the only way to pronounce it and are surprised to find that some people consider it so special. There are those who may feel that *aunt* pronounced like the name for the insect is a bit rustic even though they may use it as a title as in "aent" *Jane*, but never as a substitute for "my ahnt." The broad "a", that of *car*, in other words such as *path*, *rather*, *pasture*, *tomato* and *can't* is quite different. These words with a broad "a" used to be common among

the "gentry," but they are now rare. Even some Tidewater Virginians, in a burst of truth, would admit that they are rather pompous, perhaps even sissy. Yet, one may find some in certain circles who even today feel that they are in cultural heaven when they manage to get the right amount of Englishness in these words. This is a long preamble to my point. That is, *aunt* with the sound of *flaunt* is not the form heard on Tangier. As Tangier has been historically surrounded by a sea of "r"-lessness, it, as being "aent"-sayers, has also been surrounded by a sea of "ahnt"-sayers.

Loss of Initial Syllable

The deletion of initial syllables from words of two or more syllables has been common in spoken English for a long time and still is widespread in all regional and social varieties of English. Sometimes the process leads to the creation of new words *fence* from *defence* and *squire* from *esquire,* as we find in Shakespeare,[18] both of which, like others, can come to have good standings as different words. As we know, Tangier speakers have a tendency to simplify words of two or more syllables. *Asparagus*, for example, is reduced to "spargrass." They are not unique in using such forms as "bove" for *above*, "larm" for *alarm*, "fraid" for *afraid*, "bout" for *about*, "round" for *around*, "fore" for *before*, "neath" for *beneath*, "less" for *unless*, "xactly" for *exactly*, "gainst" for *against*, "cuse" for *excuse*, "leven" for *eleven*, for these forms abound in both relaxed and rapid speech of Americans everywhere. The Islanders do, however, differ, I think, from most with regard to the frequency and consistency of their use of the words *above* and others like "most" for *almost*, "nother" for *another*, "cause" for *because*, "peared" for *appeared*, and "member" for *remember* and their general tendency to simplify multisyllablic words. Not far from Tangier are three small towns that they are familiar with: *Urbanna*, *Saluda*, mentioned earlier, and *Onancock*, which the Islanders call "Banner," "Sluder," and "Nancock." Moreover, they pronounce *tobacco* as "baccer," *potato* as "tater," *mosquito* as "skeeter," *tomorrow* as "mor" or "mora," as noted earlier. It occurs to me that the Islanders with "big" words tend to hold on to the core element and reduce the other syllables in one way or the other. If they were, for example, to have need for *MacCormick*, *apothecary*, and *extravagance*, these words would, as one can guess, end up as "Cormick," "pothecary" and "stravagance."

Loss of Medial Sounds

The loss of sounds from the middle of words of three or more syllables is another feature with a long history and one that occurs widely today among all classes and regions. The omission from the middle of such words as *diff'rence*, *gen'rall*, *sev'ral*, and *temp'rance* used to be a feature of serious writing, not just as an attempt to characterize speakers in literary works. In speech, the utterance of such words now draws little or no attention. Though not confined to Tangier speech, the pronunciation of *battery* as "bat'try," *funeral* as "fun'ral," *history* as "his'try," *misery* as "mis'ry," *slippery* as "slip'ry," *similar* as "sim'lar," *company* as "comp'ny," *curious* as "cur'ous," *serious* as "ser'ous," *medicine* as "med'cin," and *Saturday* as "Saer'di" are sufficient to suggest that the Islanders have a strong tendency to reduce multisyllabic words. More endemic, in addition to "spargrass" for *asparagus*, are "Merland" for *Maryland*, "Baltmer" for *Baltimore*, "North Ka-line-a" for *North Carolina*, "Naswadox" for *Nassawadox*, "Harpton" for *Harborton*, "mackrel" for *mackerel*, "probly" for *probably*, "experance" for *experience*, "terble" for *terrible*, and "famly" and "fambly" for *family*.

Reduction of Consonants

Consonant reduction in the speech of Tangier is just about the rule. The final "d" and "t" are seldom heard: "cole" for *cold*, "ole" for *old*, "lef" for *left*, "craf" for *craft*, "kep" for *kept*, "ap" for *apt*, "swep" for *swept*, "dremp" for *dreamt*, "mine" for *mind*, "moun" for *mound*, and "lof" for *loft*. In reference to direction or winds, as one would expect, Tangiermen speak of "sou'westers," "sou'easter," and "nor'easter," a variation of which is "noth'easter," that is, dropping the "r" instead of the "th." "Forard" for *forward*, "backerd" for *backward*, and "forid" for *forehead* also occur. There should be no surprise that the Islanders pronounce the nautical terms *captain*, *boatswain*, and *forecastle* respectively as "cap'm," "bosun," and "foksel" or "fo'sel." Sometimes, one hears "awkerd" for *awkward*, "wa'nut," for *walnut*, "skase" for *scarce*, "some'ers" for *somewhere*. Though one may at times hear "wh" in *wharf*, *wheelbarrow* or *wheelbar*, and *whetstone*, generally there is no distinction between *weather and whether*, *wine and whine*, *witch and which*, and *watt and what*—that is, without aspiration or the loss of "h." The "-in" ending for *-ing* for verbs is widespread, and the *-s* and *ed* endings are frequently dropped.

The Addition of Sounds

Like other coastal and isolated communities, Tangier speakers have words with intrusive consonants not accounted for by etymology or history. The "t" appears in "onest," "twist," "secont," "acrosst," or "crosst," "wisht," "learnt," and "islant," among others. "Fambly" and "chimbly" occur regularly for *family* and *chimney*, as do "famly" and "chimly," pointed out earlier. One may also hear "ruinded," "stunnded," "drownded," "womern," and "umberella," which are fairly common. Like "spilt," which is common among standard speakers, "holt," "boilt" and "swolt" are common.

Alternation of Consonants

The pronunciation of *shr* as "sr" is general on Tangier, which means one will hear "srimp" for *shrimp*, "srink" for *shrink*, "srub" for *shrub*, "sred" for *shred* and "srivel" for *shrivel*. *Sink*, for the kitchen basin, is generally pronounced "zinc." One on Tangier does not usually rinse dishes but "renches" them. For *ironing*, *apron*, *hundred*, *library* and *pretty*, we find a transposition of sounds in them, resulting in "arning," "apern," "hundert," "libery," and "purty." The last two, of course, are heard in conversation everywhere with little discrimination among regions and class. As one would expect here, "greazy" is the form for *greasy*. The last item is the Islanders' rendering of *bowsprit*, which they call "bowsplit." Could "bowsplit" result from folk etymology or from the perception that it is a spar or boom splitting the bow of the boat?

9

"Over the Left Talk" or "Talking Backwards"

THAT TANGIER ISLANDERS HAVE A STRIKING IDIOM AND ACCENT IS CONceded by anyone who hears it. Those who hear it for the first time have said that they sound like Outer Bankers, mountain folk, the simple folk along the coast of Maine, or the rustics in some British regions. To be sure, all these stand apart and seem to share some pronunciation and vocabulary features and expressions to warrant such observations. Yet, the Islanders are different and, yes, somewhat distinctive. Having said that, allow me to say that, as far as I know, the manner of speaking that Tangier Islanders used to call "Over the Left Talk" but now call "Talking Backwards" is such that using the word "distinctive" is not inappropriate.[1]

To avoid the charge of not being straightforward or, perhaps, of being prejudiced, I must admit that, though both Tangier Islanders and Smith Islanders think of each other as speaking differently, they are quite ready to claim that "talking backwards" is a part of their distinctive expressions.[2] Considering how close they live to each other and the kind of lives they share, this is not surprising. Geographically close they are, only several miles apart; but socially close, they are not. They do, however, exchange visits and church activities. There is also some intermarriage, which could reasonably account for their sharing this way of talking. Did one community borrow from the other, or do they share a common source? It is difficult, maybe impossible, to answer either question with confidence. So, the question of origin remains.

Apart from this idiom being mentioned in an occasional newspaper article, the only other known references to it are those of Frances W. Dize in her *Smith Island* and Ann Hughes Jander in her *Crab's Hole*. What the latter says about this unique variety of speech deserves special notice:

> One of the most interesting customs of speech on the island is what they themselves call "talking over-the-left." This consists of saying, in even the simplest remarks, the exact opposite of the meaning intended.

> Just as it is not unusual for people elsewhere to say, "Well, this is a nice day!"—on a very rainy morning—Tangier folk will employ this speech mannerism at all times. If I wear a pretty dress for the first time, a child will say to me, "That's a poor dress," or should it be raining pitchforks he will comment, "It ain't rainin' none." Only by the subtle tone of voice can one ascertain the true meaning; and after almost five years of residence on Tangier I still occasionally confuse the message. Substituting in the high school the first winter after we moved here, I had numerous embarrassing experiences, until I learned to recognize whether the pupils were answering normally, or speaking "over the left." "That's an easy lesson" meant it was an extremely difficult one. "Yes" often meant "No." Older people on the island, when they play this trick of language, will often say something like this: "I had a poor visit—over the left." The younger people, however, are so familiar with this habit that they find no need for the old signal. Inquiring among the Tangier folk for the origin of this custom, I failed completely to trace it. People of the age of sixty or younger claim that they cannot remember when the custom hadn't existed.[3]

The phrase "over the left" does have a history, and an interesting one at that. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) considers "over the left" as a reduced form of "over the left shoulder." An entry for 1843 (W. T. Moncrieff, Scamps Lond Ii) has the sense of "over the left" that has been a part of Tangier conversation for generations: "I think she will come, Ned. Yes, *over the left* (emphasis mine), Ha! Ha! Ha!" Here "over the left" expresses the reverse of what is stated. Whether intonation, particularly pitch, and gesture joined together with "over the left" to intensify negation here, one, of course, will never know. My guess, however, is that it did, which means that "negation" or "opposite" is redundantly expressed. In *Worcester's Dictionary of the English Language* (1860), "over the left" is said to be related to "over the left shoulder," connoting "contrariwise." Though I had heard "over the left" countless times through the years, predating the accounts of Dize and Jander, I had not heard "over the left shoulder," as a reference to Tangier's "talking backwards," until the summer of 1997, when a native of Tangier who had been a foreign missionary for twenty years or more referred to it as "over-the-left-shoulder talk."

"Over the left" as a phrase, then, acts as a signal of negation of what has come before, but the Islanders today omit this signal most of the time when talking backwards and depend on "speech tune," or, as Jander nicely put it, the "musical inflection of the voice." Everyone knows that saying something in a certain way can change the meaning of an utterance or overlay the utterance with a mean-

ing not necessarily generated by the words and their order. That is, "It's not what she said but how she said it." No one has difficulty with the message in that kind of sentence. In talking backwards, the intonation or modulation of voice, varying the pitch, intensity, and tone, conveys an opposite meaning of what one hears. This is quite different from the incongruity of irony and sarcasm where there is a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning that can be detected and understood as such almost immediately by almost all speakers of any variety of English.

To understand the coloring of language of the Islanders requires an intimate exposure and familiarity, which cannot be obtained by occasional visits. Jander is right when she says, "only by [detecting] the subtle tone of voice can one ascertain the true meaning," something that she still confused after five years of residence. For the Islanders, however, there is no subtlety nor deception. Talking backwards is not an occasional speech act; it is the way they talk, not of course to strangers, but to each other. It is the daily conversation of male and female and the young as well as the old as they socially react to each other.

Earlier I stated that the Islanders have an exaggerated high pitch and tend to intensify and prolong syllables with emphasis and strong feelings. This high-rising and forceful articulation, joined by facial expressions, conveys a meaning the opposite of what words seem to express. A part of this is the addition of the phrase "over the left" at the end of the utterance, as illustrated before by the *OED* entry. The "over the left" phrase alone without the joining of the "speech tune" or musical inflection of the voice and facial expression works to express the opposite meanings of sentences to which it is adjoined. Consider the following three sentences:

1. He can't hit it (a baseball), over the left.
2. No, I don't want to go, over the left.
3. Yea! I'm going, over the left.

Remember, if there is no influence from intonation and facial or body expressions, "over the left" alone negates the meaning of these sentences, giving us in order: "He can really knock the stuffing out of a baseball," "I am really excited about going," and "I have no interest whatsoever in going." The actual utterances would, of course, be joined by intonation features and facial expressions, which means that the opposite meaning would be redundantly expressed. Now, consider some utterances without "over the left":

1. No!
2. Yea!
3. That's poor!
4. She's ugly!
5. That's smart!
6. I am!
7. He's adrift!
8. He's barefooted!
9. He won't harm you!
10. He's in good heart!
11. There ain't nothing to do here!
12. There's a lot to do here!
13. That don't hurt none!
14. Kenny ain't nowhere away!
15. I didn't catch no peelers today!
16. You didn't get your nap out!
17. John ain't got no brim on his hat!
18. She wouldn't do nothing to you!

The exclamation mark here serves to indicate that all sentences should be taken as examples with the full Tangier coloring, that of talking backwards, in their proper setting. All these sentences without the Tangier coloring—that is, with normal intonation in appropriate contexts—would mean the same to all. For example, "I am" and "That's poor" would mean respectively, "I am" in the sense of "I am the one" or "I am going" and "That's poor" in the sense that it is of "poor quality." In considering numbers 1 and 2, suppose that a person has asked the speakers of numbers 1 and 2 whether they are going to the special hymn-singing session at the church. Instead of the first responding with something like "sure," the man is likely to say "No!" with relatively high pitch and a prolonged glide downward:

No$_{o}$!

accompanied by tension and likely with lifted eyebrows, a slight turn of the head to the left, and eyes wide opened, all of which result in an excited, enthusiastic "Yes," as if he wouldn't miss it if his life depended on it. A variant response might be "No! I ain't going!" which would be an even more exuberant positive response. With "Yea!" one would use about the same intonation pattern, but with a difference in facial expression: eyebrows lifted and eyes wide-opened like the former, but the head not tilted and lips and jaw

somewhat tightened, all as if to say "That's the last thing in the world I want to do!"

Numbers 3, 4, and 5 can be taken together. "That's poor!" is a likely response that someone would utter after tasting a good dish of ice cream or a lump of backfin crabmeat dipped in hot butter, something like:

That's poorr\r!

"Poor" has a strong "r-" coloring and receives heavy emphasis with a glide downward and joined by lifted eyebrows, wide-opened eyes, and the corners of the mouth somewhat relaxed. Should someone be struck by the sight of an extraordinarily beautiful girl or how well a boat is designed, an appropriate and more than likely response would be "She's ugly!" The first sense would be that the girl is extremely pretty, and the second, that the boat is well-built and has nice lines, which I guess could be applied to the girl as well. Similar to these, is "That's smart!" A man drawing this comment about an act that he has performed or a suggestion that he has made is receiving strong disapproval and a view that he may even be stupid.

Next are numbers 6, 7, 8, and 9. For the response "I am!" an appropriate setting could be a situation where a mother asks or tells a son to forget what he is doing at the moment and run to the store to pick up a loaf of bread, with the son replying:

I ae\m!

"Am" here has high pitch, is prolonged, and then drops. This pattern is joined by exaggerated facial features, such as wide-opened eyes reflecting disappointment, lifted eyebrows, and a clenched jaw. The son is not saying impatiently "Okay! Okay! I'm going!" Rather, somewhat put out, he is saying forcefully, sassy and disobedient, that he has no intention of doing what he has been asked to do. With "He's adrift!" and "He's barefooted!" we have two utterances that typically represent the essence of talking backwards and frequently confuse those not accustomed to Tangier speech. Both are friendly compliments made by a speaker clearly impressed by a person, in case of the first, who has a large well-made and seaworthy boat, and the second, who has some rather expensive-looking shoes. And both have relatively high pitch that drops and glides downward, but not accompanied by the rather pronounced gestures of "I am!" The utterance:

He won't harm you! He won't harm you!

with the second and third syllables receiving rising and then falling pitch—that is, strong and lengthened emphasis, carries the meaning, depending on the setting, that the person being referred to is mean and despicable, a sneaky cheat, or an untrustworthy individual and to be avoided.

Similar is number 10, "He's in good heart!" Here strong emphasis is placed on the last two syllables with rising pitch. The meaning is that he is "out of heart" or "downcast," "downhearted," or "low-spirited." "Out of heart" with similar intonational features is often used to mean "high-spirited" and "full of enthusiasm."

The two utterances numbers 11 and 12, with the Tangier coloring, are respectively negative and affirmative in form but the reverse in meaning. Suppose that a person who has just taken a new office job finds the amount of work overwhelming. The person might say to a friend, "There ain't nothing to do here!" As a normally expressed observation—that is, not talking backwards—it would be a complaint of boredom, but with Tangier coloring it is a complaint about too much to do. "There's a lot to do here" would generally carry the meaning that a person would have a lot to do. With the Tangier coloring, however, the utterance becomes a complaint of boredom. Uttered emphatically in the Tangier manner, both express disapproval. The diagrams show little difference, if heard correctly.

There ain't nothing to do he–re! There ain't nothing to do he—re!

There's a lot to do he-re! There's a–lot \ to–do he—re!

However, the head seems to be slightly tilted upward with the first and downward with the second, though both with the same intensity, with lifted eyebrows, and with the corners of the mouth stretched some.

For the rest, it will suffice to confine discussion to only the message conveyed. When an Islander mashes his fingers with a hammer, he is quite likely to say "That don't hurt none!" meaning that he is in excruciating pain. For a mother to speak of her son in the service in, for example, Korea, to describe the distance her response could be "Kenny ain't nowhere away!" She, of course, is "out of heart" or despondent because he is so far away. A waterman returning from the crab grounds and excited about his catch may blurt out "I didn't catch no crabs today!" What he means is not that he had a miserable catch but an abundant one.

The Islanders are quick to comment on oddity and given to playful mocking and may, for example, utter "You didn't get your nap out!" and "You ain't got no brim on your hat!" The first would be a response to a person he has encountered who has just awakened from an afternoon nap with the print of the bedspread fixed firmly on his face, chiding him for sleeping so long. The other would be a "teasing" comment about a friend's cap with an unusually long brim. He might even say "You're going to get sunstruck!" meaning, of course, that he is well-protected from the sun. And finally, "She wouldn't do nothing to you!" Means quite the opposite, expressing that one needs to be wary of her.

Earlier, I reported how Anne Hughes Jander spoke of "over the left" speech as somewhat of a linguistic maze and stressed how, after five years of residence, she still failed to catch some of the subtleties of language. I can remember how my wife and the spouses of my brothers and sister were puzzled by some of the comments of the Islanders and our own and were even startled because they felt that they were being made fun of and that those making the comments were rather forward. They came to understand the playfulness and harmlessness of Tangier speech and even after awhile unconsciously demonstrated in their own speech just how infectious "over the left talk" or "talking backwards" really is.

10

Words, Names, and Expressions

FOR SOME REASON, WHEN IT COMES TO VOCABULARY OF REGIONAL VARIeties of a language, especially the remote and isolated ones, a reader expects a list of words and expressions that occur only in one dialect and not in any others. This may be true because in stories about Appalachia, the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and Tangier, to name only some, journalists frequently tend to say that their residents speak "a pure Elizabethan English." No such variety exists today, nor has it ever existed, not even in the times of Elizabeth. Can one even come up with a list of locutions that is unique to any variety of English spoken today or, for that matter, any other day? Such a list would be hard to find. Can one even select a dialect, that of Tangier, for example, and state that it is a distinct dialect? Not if one means that it is totally, unquestionably, and unmistakably different from all others. Tangier English is not pure English. BBC English is not pure English. Not even that of Shakespeare and Chaucer is pure English.

What then can one say about a dialect like that of Tangier that has been called "unique," "pure," and the "purest form of Elizabethan English"? One can perhaps safely say that it is a relic dialect in the sense that it is a variety that is receding inwardly and is in some respects surviving the passage of time. Let me hasten to add that I do not mean that it is timeless and without change. It is also safe to say, I think, that one can think of it as "distinctive," not "distinct," as long "distinctive" means "being set apart" because of its overall nature and general composition of features. In comparison with the speech of Ocracoke and certain Appalachian communities, the speech of Tangier Island—though it shares many features with these and not other communities—is different in its combination of features, those that have already been talked about and those that follow, to the extent that it is worthy of being characterized as a dialect that does stick out and is distinctive. I have already discussed pronunciation and "talking backwards." Now, I

will consider words—including words about things, people, and work—names, and expressions.

With a few exceptions, all the items presented here, if not used daily, are known, understood, and remembered by most of the people living on Tangier now. Change has, of course, taken place here as everywhere else. The younger sort do not use *cockhoss*, *spider*, *squamish*, *cookroom*, and *counterpane*; instead, they say *seesaw*, *frying pan*, *queasy*, *kitchen*, and *bedspread*. Most use *curtain*, *squall*, *smornin'*, *shelf*, *clean across*, *likete*, *he's to the crab house*, and *bimeby*. *Quoits*, a feature from the Lowman field records[1] for horseshoes, would stump almost everyone on the Island. It is interesting that about fifty years ago a game called "pitching rings" was popular. Similar to horseshoes or quoits, it required the use of several perforated disks or washers about two to three inches in diameter, which were thrown or pitched at dugouts in the ground, instead of at stakes. Likewise, *spider* occurred in the 1902 edition of the *Sears Roebuck Catalog*, but today only *frying pan* and *skillet* appear in such catalogs. Change is most apparent, of course, in the material changes brought on by technology and the overall progress and change in how people live their lives.

Words

Time and Distance

For periods of the day, *morning* and *night* are usually used, though *afternoon* and *evening* do occur. For reference to a particular morning, such as *this morning*, the Islanders tend to say "smornin." It is interesting that "smornin" occurs in Cockney as well.[2] For *yesterday*, *tomorrow*, and *Saturday*, "yisterdi," "tomor," "mor," and "mora," and "Saerdi" are generally used. *Daybreak*, *sunup*, *daylight*, *light*, or *at light* are used for sunrise, with little preference for one or the other. Watermen usually get up before sunrise and perhaps more often than not say that they are going out (crabbing) "fore (afore) light." "Fore dark" occurs along with *sunset* and *sundown*. *Of a morning* or *mornings*, *of a Sunday* or *Sundays*, and *of a night* or *of nights* are phrases one hears most of the time. The two elderly informants of the 1936 field records[3] used "half past sebin" for 7:30 and "quarter to lebin" for 10:45, usages frequently heard today along with *half past seven* and a *quarter to (e)leven*. To urge someone to move with haste, the typical phrase is *make a hurry*. *Anytime soon*, *a long spell*, and *a while back* are

frequently used for periods of time of indefinite length. Of these items, the significant feature here is the abbreviated forms for *morning*, *yesterday*, and *tomorrow*, all of which were also discussed under pronunciation. For estimates of distance, the Islanders alternately use *a little ways*, *a good ways*, *a long ways*, *over yonder*.

Weather

For generations, *squall* and *thundern-lightning* have been the common terms for thunderstorms, but *thunderstorms* is also heard, perhaps because watermen pay close attention to television weather reports. *Blowing a gale* is most frequently used for strong winds. For a heavy shower, like many Southerners, the Islanders use *pouring down rain*. For lighter rains, either a *study drizzel* or a *misty rain* are used. For changes in fog, *foggin up*, *getting foggy* or *thickening up* are variously used. When the day is becoming fair and sunny and, less messy, one tends to use, *it's clearing up* or *letting up*. Increasing wind is typically described as *picking up* and frequently as *breezing up* or *abreezing up*. Decreasing winds are described as *dying down* or *dying out*. For extended rainless periods, *drouth* and *dry spell* are common. The Islanders, like other watermen of the outermost communities of the Atlantic slope, use *slick cam* or *cam* for smooth slatelike waters. The two most frequent winds around the Bay and Atlantic coast are northeasters and southwesters, which the Islanders, respectively, call *nor'easters* and *sou'westers*. For the former, one may also hear *no'theasters*. Other wind-direction terms are *nor'wester*, *sou'easter*, *out of the north*, *to the northard*, *about south*, *to the southard*, *out of the south*, *winerd* and *leward*. Is it not curious that local and national television weather reporters are using *nor'easter* in reference to a northeast wind almost exclusively? Why, I am not sure. Perhaps they do it to sound nautical or to suggest a "coziness" with mariners or watermen. I wonder whether they are aware of how awkward they sound using a pronunciation they are unaccustomed to and whether they should not leave it to those who are accustomed to using it. One irate Chesapeake Bay resident chastised television weathermen in an op-ed letter for using New England language. Whether his stance is defensible is one thing, but his source of *nor'easter* as New England is, I believe, right on the money. It is, of course, well known along the Bay and perhaps all along the Atlantic Seaboard. Among the earliest settlers of New England were many from the West Country of England, an area of shipbuilding and

fishing and a likely source of many of our nautical and sea weather terms.[4] Their currency along the Bay and Outer Banks could be due to the same influence. However, it is just as likely that New England mariners and oystermen brought them south during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

House and Household

For the place where the cooking is done, the only term, as one would expect, is *kitchen*. Lowman's informants used *cookroom*, now very old-fashioned and never heard. The nice room of the house where people used to gather in the evenings, but now seldom or never do, is generally called the *living room* and variously the *big room* or *front room* and sometimes *sittin room* and the *other room*, which probably distinguishes it from the rest of the rooms in houses with only it, bedrooms, and a kitchen. For a room that stores odds and ends, the traditional term in Virginia is *lumber room*, but today most Virginians, including the Islanders, call it *junk room*, *store room*, or *storage room*. It is interesting to note that Lowman's informants used *rumidgmint* and *trumprymint*, the first, a variation of *rummage room* and, the second, *trumpery room*. These terms have generally disappeared from Tangier usage and exist in the memories of only the very old. Until recent times *garret* was used almost exclusively for the unfinished part under the roof of the house and now is being challenged by *attic*. The common term for a place where clothes are kept or wardrobe is *clothes closet*, which stood earlier for an unattached tall chest for clothes but now even for built-in closets. Closets in the kitchen were usually called *kitchen closets,* but now *pantry* is frequently heard. Instead of the use of *mantel* for the shelf over a fireplace, one finds *shelf* on Tangier, though the former is occasionally used and most know what it means. The common term for blinds, roller shades, or any window dressing on Tangier is *curtains* or *winder curtains*. A long upholstered seat with back and arms has always been commonly called a *couch* and, frequently, a *daybed*. *Sofa* today competes very strongly with *couch*, and *daybed* seems on the decline or to be used for a different piece of furniture now available to them. The chest of drawers without a mirror was and still is commonly called a *bureau*; and for the one with a mirror, *dresser* is usual. Until recent times, a mirror was called a *looking glass*, now rare. The name for a piece of furniture with a set of open shelves for ornaments is a *whatnot*, which is also the word for the individual pieces on the shelves. Though *comfort* and *counterpane* ("pin") were common years ago

for the top covering of a bed, what is usual today is *spread* and *bedspread*, even *quilt*. For an improvised bed on the floor for company, the Lowman records had *lodge*,[5] still known to the residents, but generally replaced by *pallet*, which is receding here, as everywhere, perhaps because of the popularity of the sleeping bag. It is interesting to note that Kurath in his *Word Geography* observed that *lodge* years ago was the preferred term on the southern part of the Delmarva peninsula and that *pallet* was general in the southern part of the United States.[6] The cover for a pillow is *piller slip*, but *piller case* is also heard.

A pan for frying would be called on Tangier today *frying pan*, not *fry pan* nor *skillet*. Both informants in the 1936 interviews gave *spider* as their response, but the older of the two added to his response that he meant "one in the fireplace," which, of course, usually had a long handle and short legs. *Spider* was used for the heavy pan for tops of stoves well into the forties and perhaps beyond. Even in earlier editions of the *Sears Roebuck Catalog*, *spider* was used along with *fry pan*, as mentioned earlier. On Tangier, *spider* is more than a remnant even in the memories of the not-so-old and not just for the heavy iron pan but for the lighter ones as well. It is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the use of *fry pan* and *skillet* could have been encouraged by the Sears catalog, not just technology, and that it had some influence in *frying pan* replacing *spider*. Most Southerners familiar with *spider* think of it as old-fashioned speech of the South. The *Oxford English Dictionary's* (*OED*) entry makes it clear that it is an Americanism. *The Dictionary of American English* (*DAE*) gives its earliest appearance as 1790. Kurath shows that it was widely used in New England and an important marker in other Northern states, as well as of the lower Chesapeake Bay and Carolina shore. It is hard to resist the thought that it may have been brought to the Bay and Carolina areas by the invasion of Yankee dredging boats around the 1790–1800 years. A cloth for washing dishes is a *dishrag*, and one for drying them is a *tea towel*. For washing the body or for "scouring" and "washing," Tangier Islanders use a *washrag*.

Even after the availability of electric refrigerators, the Islanders usually called them *iceboxes* and then later *frigidaires*, no matter the trade brand. Smoothing irons, also even after the availability of electric ones, were for a long time called *flatirons* and were later reduced to *irons*. A swatter to kill flies was usually called a *flyflap* or *flyflapper*, but today the more general term is *flyswatter*. For any kind of cork to plug a jar or bottle, the Islanders use *stopper*. Rather than *flashlight* for a portable lamp powered by batteries and *binoc-*

ulars for an optical device with stereoscopic vision, older people, not exclusively the elderly, still use *searchlights* and *spyglasses*. Bags made of paper and cloth are respectively called *paper bag* and *sack bag*. The preferred term for an armful of wood was *turn of wood*, though *armful of wood* was not uncommon. Islanders still use *baby carriage*, believed to be the oldest expression, for a wheeled carriage for carrying an infant. A bed for babies (sometimes with rockers) was called a *cradle*. A small flat implement for turning eggs and other foods is called a *turnover*. *Turner* is seldom, if ever, used, and *spatula* would be fancy talk for many. *Gum boots*, *gum bands*, and *gum beans* or *gum eggs* were normal years ago for rubber hip boots, rubber bands, and jelly beans, respectively. Today, one may encounter only sporadic uses of these words, perhaps because the watermen have replaced the hip boots with calf- or knee-length boots and because stores advertise and label the other two only as rubber bands and jelly beans. Earlier studies show that *gum band* occurs quite frequently in Pennsylvania. Apparently, *gum boots* is alive in England, for I heard it on a very popular British talk show. Moreover, L. L. Bean still uses *gum boots* in its catalogs. Like most villages today, Tangier has no use for the chamber pot. When they did, and they did longer than most, they usually called it a *slop jar* and upon more polite occasions, a *chamber pot*.

Until after World War II, families on Tangier, like many on the Shore, raised hogs in their backyards, if they had space and, if not, anywhere they could. Before one or two outbreaks of cholera made them a little nervous about pork, they slaughtered their own hogs and used the scraps of heart, head, feet, and so on to make loaves of meat they called *souse-cheese* or *scrapple*. A biscuit made with the crisp browned rind of a roasted pig they called *crackling bread* or *biscuits*. A pinch of dough rounded to about the size of a quarter and used in clam chowder is called a *doughboy*. They use *cream potatoes* for mash(-ed) potatoes. Rolls made with yeast and sugar were called *eastrolls*, not *yeastrolls*. For breakfast they fried a doughy mixture they called *fried bread*. *Clabber*, the common term for sour curdled milk, had no competition as a term in the community. The same can be said for *fat meat* for salt pork. *Midlin* was recorded in the Lowman interviews, but it is now known only by the older residents. Common terms are *snap beans*, *butter beans*, *lima beans*, *navy beans*, *greens*, and *roasting ears*. *Asparagus* would never have been a part of the Tangier diet had it not grown wild along the marshy banks. This vegetable, which became a favorite food for some of the Islanders and the hunting for it a pleasurable pastime, they called *spargrass*, and the gathering of it,

spargrassing. Lowman recorded *simblin*, for "cymling" or "squash" generally known today.[7] The carbonated soft drink, known elsewhere as *pop*, *tonic*, or *soda*, is simply called *drink*. In the thirties, the Islanders used to drink what they called "Keller's Blood," somewhat of a stimulant with a strawberry flavor. Bread dipped in coffee, normally for breakfast, was called "soaks."

Though *vittles* was used for food some time ago by watermen who frequently used to leave the Island for distant oyster beds and crabbing grounds for weeks, they tended to use *grub*. Today, *vittles* and *grub* are used facetiously for the most part and have given way to *groceries*. When women go for groceries today, they seldom use these words and merely say that they are *going to the store*. Because of the seasonal nature of a waterman's work, which used to require weeks away from home, the families were offered credit by the local stores. They called the practice *ticking* or *give tick*. Salesmen who came to the Island selling their wares—Knapp shoes, for example—were called *drummers*.

Words like *handirons*, *fire irons*, *backlogs*, *white ashes*, *coal hod*, *coal oil*, and *lightwood* prevailed when wood and coal provided the source for heat. Nowadays, of these, only *coal oil*, a term of Midland and Pennsylvania origin, exists. When paling fences and outside toilets were popular, they were called *picket fences*, now replaced by *anchor fences* or chain-link ones, and *outhouses*, or *backhouses*, neither of which exists today. *Gutters*, *weatherboarding*, *spicket*, *saw-hoss* are still current. Though *wheelbarrow* occurs as a reduced form wheelbarr(*uh*), *wheelbar* is the common term. The Islanders continue to *cut* things, spigots, for example, *on* and *off*.

For the insects they know, *chinch*, *skeeter hawk*, and *dirt dobbers* are the popular terms. For the night bug that produces light, *lightning bug* is the only form. For any wiry grass such as Bermuda, the Islanders still use *wire grass*. They have a tendency to use *grass cutter* for any implement used to cut grass, whether it is a lawn mower, sling blade or weed eater, but the name of the latter two are commonly heard for those implements. The waterproof canvas for protection is called *tarpollon* or just *canvas*.

Clothing and Dress

For most of their lives, owning several pairs of dress shoes and suits would have been a rarity for Tangier people. When they spoke of the shoes and clothing on Sunday, they would usually say my *good shoes* or *Sunday shoes* and *good suit* or *Sunday suit*. On Sunday, they usually *dress up*, but occasionally they *fix up*. Years ago,

they may even have *prinked up*. Sometimes, the men wore suspenders, which they called *spenders* or *galluses*. Even now, when they go swimming, they wear *bathing suits*. Protruding pockets are said to be *bulging* or *puffing out*. They used to call trousers *britches* and denims, bibbed or not, *overhalls*, both of which are giving way to *pants* and *jeans*. They call tennis shoes *canvas shoes*. A person whose pants or slack's seat is being drawn up his or her rear end is observed as *corking*, from *caulking*. Women's underpants used to be called *drawers* and *bloomers*, and men's long johns, *union suits*. Among older women, *step ins*, garments worn by stepping into them, was commonly used for loose drawers. Jackets of all kinds, years ago, were usually called *lumber jackets*. A person without clothes on would have been described as *startnaked*.

Family Matters

The Tangier family rarely uses the formal designations *mother*, *father*, *uncle*, *aunt*, *grandmother*, and *grandfather*, unless these relatives are spoken of in conversations to "strangers." In practice, even in more polite situations, they address them or speak of them as *mama* or *mom*, *daddy* or *dad*, *grandmama* or *grandma*, *grandpa* or *grandpop*. For uncles and aunts, unless they are much older, *Andra* and *Bob* are used, not usually *Uncle Andra* and *Uncle Bob*. First name designations are usual on Tangier. Seldom does one hear *Mr.* or *Mrs.* when the Islanders refer to other Islanders. An exception, perhaps, would be teachers and preachers.

Captain or *cap'n* some years ago was a title conferred upon quite a number of older men. It is interesting that no one seems to know why the men addressed this way were called such. Noteworthy is that no one carries that title today. A guess is that those who were addressed *cap'n* were those who were owners, captains, or pilots of larger boats or sailing vessels. Many of those men were also known for their piety and leadership in the church. Of interest is that the title was always used with the first name, such as *Cap'n John* or *Cap'n Harrison*, not with their surnames.

A woman who loses her husband is called a *wider*, and the man who loses his wife, a *widerer*. When a midwife was a part of health care, she was called a *granny woman*. A person who delivers a child, a doctor or otherwise, is said to *have born* the child. Anyone in a wedding, the best man or a bridesmaid, was called a *waiter* years ago, a term generally not known on Tangier today. A pregnant woman years ago would be *in the family way*. *Pregnant* might be used today under restricted conditions. The likely term is simply

having a baby. The Islanders have traditionally referred to a severe cough or cold as the *crup* or *croop*, as spelled in some letters. Diabetes is commonly called *sugar*, and jaundice, *yella janders*. A boy and girl dating are said to be *courting* or *going together*. Some time ago, a boy dating a girl would be spoken of as *galing* or *agaling*. When a child resembles a mother or father or some other relative, they tend to say either he *favors* or *takes after* that person.

Terms of endearment and affectionate speech and display are generally confined to speaking about children. Within the individual families, there is among adults a conspicuous lack of "soft words," like *darling*, *honey*, or *sweetheart*. This should not be taken to mean, of course, that there is a lack of affection. The family and the extended families are usually very close. There just is no public display of how they feel. They refer to their relatives as *kin* and speak of them to others as *my Loretta*, *Katie's Beth* or *Ida Bell's Edith's Diane*.

Though fishermen, like sailors, have notorious reputations worldwide for profanity and obscenity, public swearing rarely takes place on Tangier, even around docks and in the stores where mostly men tend to gather, and especially not in the presence of women and children. In anger, disgust, and sudden pain, coarse language such as *damn*, *hell*, *shit*, *God damn it*, and the like, may be occasional, but it is not habitual or vulgar. Bathroom activities are covered by *I got to go to the bathroom*. I have seldom heard *pee* in their homes and never *piss* or *pissed off*, expressions almost as common as "good morning" on the mainland. Two names for the female genitalia of interest and rare occurrence elsewhere are *twitchet* and *tippet*, which, of course, would not be used in public.

Tangier has not had much experience with other nationalities, not even Blacks, except that noted earlier. Apparently one of them was named "Doodles," for an expression "black as Doodles" has survived. The Islanders have seldom referred to Blacks as *Negroes*, *Blacks*, or *African Americans*. The typical term is *nigger* as a sudden response. If there is a pause, it might be *colored man*. *Darky* earlier was somewhat prevalent when that term was in vogue generally in the South. Their use of the derogatory terms, I do not think, was due to racism or an intent to degrade. Those were the terms, especially *nigger*, that they had usually heard others use. Many Tangiermen had years ago worked side by side with Blacks on the large dredge boats, a dirty and dangerous job, from which the comparison *dirty as a Norfolk nigger* probably came. Today some use *nigger* almost instinctively, for which there is no excuse, but

many would consider any other term, except *colored man*, as putting on linguistic airs.

All outsiders coming to Tangier are called *strangers*, not with the connotation of being weird, but "from the outside." Greetings and farewells are few. In fact, rather than "good morning" or "good evening," *hey* is the usual greeting to both strangers and residents. For departing, nothing sticks out as ordinary, except perhaps *see-ya*. On New Year's Day, *New Year's Gift* was, especially among boys, the customary salutation, an expression that they thought would draw a gift of a nickel, dime, or quarter. In the day-to-day appraisals of the temperaments or dispositions of family or friends, Tangiermen stay away from words such as "difficult" and "generous" and favor *hardheaded*, *goodhearted*, and *freehearted*. A person of even temper is *good-natured*, one who is slow is *back'ard* or *awk'ard*. *Good* and *sweet* are terms of approval. Someone who is bad is *no-count*. A person who is headstrong and eccentric is said to be *quare*, and a child running along a paved surface who stubs a toe accidentally is said to have *stumped* his or her toe. When women get together for a length of time, they call it a "gathering."

The Lowman surveys record *cockhorse* and *cockhorsing* (perhaps *-hoss* and *-hossing*) for the seesaw.[8] Three middle-aged women as a group just recently gave me almost simultaneously in conversation *cockhoss*, though they said that they generally use *seesaw*. Kurath noted that *cockyhorse* and *cockhorse* were local expressions in southern Delaware and adjoining parts of Maryland.[9] The earliest recording of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) is 1540; this and the other entries expressed the sense of "astride" with particular reference to children's games of some sort, but not specifically to seesaw. It may be that this sense is basically American, but the things that American children love to do "astride" are numerous. Though *The Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE) does not have an entry for it, other desk dictionaries do, but with the name for a "rocking horse," which means that in this sense *cockhoss* is general and thus accounts for DARE's not having an entry.

Just a few years ago, I asked a young man about playing and games, and he quickly volunteered *losipe* for tricycle. Later, I learned about *velocipede*, an early bicycle that was propelled by one straddling it and pushing it along. A game where one throws a ball over a portion of a house is called *Annie-over*. As I remember the game, one or two players were on either side of the house. Those who had the ball would yell "Annie," and the other side would respond by saying "over," which meant they were in position and

ready. The ball was then thrown; if not caught, it would be thrown back. If caught, the one who caught the ball would run around the house and try, by throwing, to hit one of the other players on the other side to become the winner.

Wampus is used for some strange or imaginary animal or fish of great size. Children on Tangier *skip* shells, *shinny up* trees, at times do *belly-busters* when diving, and they used to play a *mouth organ* and a *juice harp*. Someone falling headfirst from the bow of a boat or from any perch is said to have fallen *headfomus*. People who become exhausted are said to be *wore out*, those who have become ill have *took sick*, and those who are losing weight are said to be *falling off*. Should the families have three meals a day, they eat *breakfast*, *dinner*, and *supper*. Usually, they have only two, *breakfast* and *dinner*, the big meal around two o'clock, after which they snack until they go to bed. They speak of going to the Main Ridge as *to go over* and *going over*.

Work

Getting to know the watermen who work the Bay for their living is not easy. Becoming intelligent about the words they use as they go about their workaday lives harvesting the variety of marine life of the Chesapeake Bay is just as hard. Yet, if observers do more than view it from a distance and encounter the water and its life and the life of the watermen, it is hard for them to do it without becoming curious. The life of the Bay and of the watermen, as William Warner learned, reveals itself slowly. About their talk, he wrote: "One cannot sit around very long and listen passively to this kind of talk. I have not been able to at least."[10] The colorful and wide-ranging vocabulary of the Tangier watermen is shared by other watermen communities of the Bay and even beyond, but, perhaps as a matter of pride, not to mention birth, I must say that Tangier has probably been prominent in its development.

Allow me to begin with *waterman*, which merits special discussion. In a list of Tangier marriages covering the years 1883–1911, occupations of the groom were listed until 1899, and among them were *sailor*, *mariner*, *fisherman*, *oysterman*, and *waterman*. Apparently, crabbing was not a thriving and profitable undertaking at that time. This was the period of sailing vessels, such as the *schooner*, a fore-and-aft rigged vessel about fifty feet long; the *sloop*, a smaller fore-and-aft rigged vessel of about thirty to forty feet long; and the *pungee*, an even smaller vessel with a mainsail under thirty feet long, probably the most popular sailing vessel at the time. A

sailor at this time was a man who worked on one of these vessels, particularly the schooner and the sloop. A *mariner* was one who owned a vessel, and, if a schooner, he was likely to have the title of "captain." A *fisherman* and an *oysterman* were obviously engaged in endeavors indicated by the words themselves. A *waterman* had the same sense that it has today—that is, one who "follows the water": a fisherman, an oysterman, and, more recently, a crabber and a clammer. To watermen, it is a person who engages in one or all of these practices.[11] In the words of a Tangier waterman and a boyhood friend, Leon McMann, it means "someone who makes his living on the water and who is out there on it every day he can be."

Whatever their pursuit, the watermen south of the Chesapeake Bay and the Outer Banks, even to Louisiana and Texas, are called *fishermen*, which means that those who fish are *fishermen*, those who crab are *crab fishermen*, and those who oyster are *oyster fishermen*. Just why the inclusive meaning of *watermen* has taken hold along the Bay and not elsewhere is difficult to explain. The first entry in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) for *watermen* is 1400 with a citation from the *Alliterative Morte D'Arthur*: "Wygthly one the wale thay wye up thaire ankers; By wytt of the *watyrmene* of the wale ythez," which refers to the weight of watermen and the gunwales supporting their anchors on the rising of the waves, clearly meaning that they are "seamen" or "mariners." For 1549, there is an entry that speaks of "John Boyes of Maldon did bye of John Marteyn of Bradwell, *Waterman*, one hunderith and syxe bussells of oysters." This, too, has the sense of *waterman* as a seaman of sorts. Whether we can say "oysterman" is not clear. Consider the following citations:

1550: lyke as a *waterman* wyll neuver let out his sayle so farre
1638: This all fishers and *watermen* can tell for they can finde water deepest in the loosest earth
1651: encountered a faint-hearted *waterman* in a storm
1860: *watermen* on a [college] barge showing them
1913: one of the bullets struck a *waterman* on the *Oueen*

The most recent *OED* citations indicate that *waterman* meant "a man working on a boat or among boats," or "a licensed wherry [a light rowboat or sailing vessel] man who plies for hire on a river," or a "bargeman." This sense seems to be that found in *Undaunted Courage*, when Meriwether Lewis speaks of Charbonneau at the helm of their pirogue as "perhaps the most timid *waterman* in the world."[12] The current sense of one who "follows the water" fishing,

oystering, and crabbing, then, seems to be recent, even more recent than the designations from the 1883–99 marriage lists suggest for the word. As a schoolboy in the forties and fifties, I had to fill in school forms, like everyone else, asking for family information, especially the father's occupation and income. I vividly remember selecting *fisherman* in preference to *oysterman* and *crabber* (my father was all three) because I felt it was "a little more prestigious." It never occurred to me nor my parents, not to mention the school officials or teachers, all of whom lived among those who followed the water, to put *waterman*. Today, *waterman* is the common term, no matter the pursuit.

Few people do not enjoy the color and activity of the harbor of a watermen's village. What many of them do not realize is that the fisheries of these harbors have a rich and colorful vocabulary. Let me begin with their boats and gear. The boats are indigenous to their regions and locales, basically devised, built, and worked by their owners or neighbors along the Bay. What seems like, upon first sight, a bewildering number of designs turns out to be merely variations of a plan. The boats reflect the past and seem to be derived from memory of generations of experience. They are rarely, if ever, touched by professional designers. Unlike with farming and farming equipment, obsolescence and replacement of the technology and of vocabulary are not major factors with most fisheries along the Bay. There are a few terms, however, for sailing craft that are known only by older watermen: *schooner*, *ram*, *pungy*, *bugeye*, all of which, except *schooner*, have obscure origins. The ram, a very large commercial sailing vessel, was called "Nanticoke rams" because their building was centered in little towns in Delaware and Maryland whose creeks emptied into the Nanticoke River. Robert H. Burgess in his *This Was Chesapeake Bay* notes that *ram* is a strange name for a type of vessel but recalls a handed-down origin:

> During the era when the first ram went through the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, much of the towage was done by horses and mules—some by towboat. There were numerous small schooners with long, projecting jib booms that required particular attention to prevent the craft from fouling each other. The ram could stand rougher treatment because it was larger, bargelike, and had no jib boom. Billy Borwick, the owner of a ship chandlery at Chesapeake City, Maryland, observed the first ram coming through the canal and exclaimed, "Look at that d—— thing butting her way through the other schooners; she's acting just like a ram."[13]

However, this account may be fanciful, since *ram* does have nautical and shipbuilding senses. A ram was a projection of sorts on the

prow of early warships used to "ram" enemy vessels. The ram as a sailing vessel had a bow almost ninety degrees to the water (straight up and down, not much angle at all), which, of course, could be effective for cutting into another vessel. Even so, the most accurate thing that can be said is that its origin is obscure. Having said this, let me add that a descendant of early sailing captains along the Bay gave me the same story and had never heard of Burgess.[14]

The *pungy*, or *pungee*, a keeled vessel, schooner-rigged, was at one time the favorite vessel of oyster dredgers; the word's derivation is also not clear. In a 1901 entry, the *OED* lists "this old *pung*," perhaps an Indian word, from *Scribner's Magazine*, meaning "boat" and calls its origin "obscure." However, it notes that in Massachusetts *pungy* is a small boat like a "sharpie," which is a long narrow flat-bottomed fishing boat with a centerboard and one or two masts and triangular sails.

The *bugeye*, closely associated with the dredging of oysters, which, some say, actually gave birth to it, was developed from the log canoe and became the best known of the Bay types, one particularly popular on Tangier. Since the *OED* is silent about the *bugeye*, we can safely assume its American origin. Oldtimers speak of this sailing vessel with fondness and explain the origin of *bugeye* as representing the design of the bow with large holes, or hawseholes, the bulging eyes, through which cables ran for mooring (with anchor) or for towing. M. V. Brewington discounts several attempts—some of which he calls ludicrous—to explain the origin of *bugeye*. He finally concludes that it must have resulted from the transfer or corruption of some foreign word—the Scotch word *bucklar*, the name of a type of boat, for example. He states that the bugeye had existed by 1867, but its name did not appear in print until 1880. Two years before, in 1878, he notes, it had appeared as *buckeye*.[15] From a recent interview with members of a sailing family (mentioned above) reaching back to the period of these large sailing vessels, I learned that the bugeye, with the large hawseholes on either side of the bow, was painted orange, and from a distance, with these hawseholes against the background of orange, one could think of bulging eyes and go on to conceive of "bugeye" for the name of the vessel.[16] The bugeye, like the ram and the pungy, was a part of the early oyster business and now is a part of the past.

There was another craft that was early associated with oystering and still is in Maryland waters, the *skipjack*, variously called *sailing skiff*, *bateau*, or *deadrise*. Some oldtimers say that it derived its name from the bluefish or from a species of fish called the *skipjack*. A part of the rig of a skipjack today is a small boat with a motor

called a *push boat* or *yawl boat* used to shove the skipjack when it is not under sail. This boat and its name will soon pass; its existence today is only the result of Maryland's conservation laws and the desire of some who have converted them into sailing yachts.

The ancestor of some of the sailing vessels, primarily the bugeye, was the log canoe, which developed from the Indian dugout canoe. The canoe later was used for tonging oysters in the Bay, but, like the others, it is no longer built and now is a part of history. Watermen called the log canoe a *cunner*, *cuno*, and *canoe*, all spelled in various ways. Tangiermen pronounced the word "kuhn-o." With the passing of these sailing vessels went a good bit of the charm, beauty, and spirit of the Bay, not to mention words that now are known only by older watermen.

The most common type of workboat built on the Chesapeake Bay today is the shoal or shallow V-bottom hull known by watermen as the *deadrise*, a name along with *skiff* and *bateau* used also for the skipjack. *Deadrise*, however, is a generic term and does not adequately describe any of the boats. They may be *clinker-built* (lapped-over) or *channel-built* (edge-to-edge), or, as watermen say, *lapstrake* (instead of *lapstreak*) or perhaps, *smooth-planked*. One hears *barcat*, *round-stern*, *box-stern* or *square-stern*, *diamond-stern* or *V-stern*, and *ducktail* or *draketail* for the types that exist. There is no such thing as a single stereotyped design for crab boats, oyster boats, fishing boats, or clam boats, no matter the kinds of rigs they use. They vary in size, equipment, construction, quality, and hull form, though most being built today are with box or square sterns. The watermen use their boats themselves, and in more than a single industry and for more than a single purpose.

Of those listed above, only the *barcat* and the *ducktail* or *draketail* require special mention. The barcat developed from a smaller, cut-down version of the skipjack. It is motor-driven and designed to move over very shallow bottoms, even sandbars at relatively low water—thus *barcat*. The *ducktail* or *draketail*, earlier called *Hooper Island draketail* for its place of origin, is a reversed-raked rounded-stern boat, which is now no longer built and rarely, if ever, seen.

Small boats are *skiff* or *skift* (the generic term), *bateau*, and *push* or *yawl boat* (mentioned earlier). The middle seat of a skiff was called by oldtimers a *thaught*, a variation of *thwart*, probably from *athwart*, meaning "across," and here, the "seat across the boat." Watermen generally call any type of small boat or rowboat a *skiff*, though the term was used earlier to refer to larger sailing vessels about the size of a log canoe and a skipjack.

Bateau or *batteau* is a pretty common term for a flat-bottomed boat; it is particularly universal in South Carolina and Georgia. The term itself is common along the Atlantic coast from Sandy Hook, New Jersey, to Georgia and common on the Delaware and Chesapeake bays. *Bateau* is a common term among watermen but not among landlubbers, who think of it as quaint and rustic. Watermen use it for all sizes of relatively small boats, flat-bottomed or V-bottomed, whether powered or not. The *OED* describes *bateau* as a "light river boat; especially the long tapering boats with flatbottoms used by the French Canadians." As one would expect, the term is used in Louisiana. Watermen—or *fishermen,* as they are called there—also use *pirogue*, once thought of as a type of log canoe but now a small boat. The word is used interchangeably with *bateau*, which some years ago was also used for the log canoes built along the Bay. A variation of the flat-bottomed bateau used by some haul seiners is *kilroy*, named thus because it could go almost anywhere.

When watermen come into the harbor at the end of a day's work, they *dock* their boats *at* and *tie* them *up to docks*, *wharves*, or *landings*, seldom to *piers*, a fancy word to them. If they are selling crabs, the dock becomes a *crab dock*; fish, a *fish dock*; oysters, an *oyster house*. *Wharf* can be substituted and has frequently been coupled with a proper name to form a place-name—*Willis Wharf*, for example, on the seaside of Virginia's Eastern Shore. When watermen used to sell their catches out in the rivers or bays, they sold to *buy boats*, *run boats*, or *market boats,* but the first was the usual term. Their boats have *bow lines* and *stern lines*, but the *bow line* to the waterman is a *painter* used to fasten his boat to a *stake*, *piling*, *cleat*, *sampson* (samson) *post* or *dredge post*, *stanchion*, or *niggerhead*. *Painter* is of uncertain origin, but the waterman's sense of it goes back to 1487. Along the Bay, it is now not heard as much as it once was, except on the islands like Tangier and Smith Island, where now even the children tend to call it a *bow line*.

Watermen are not quite as precise as professional sailors, who feel that every boat and every thing must have a distinctive name. Yet, names they have; some are quite literal, some not. What most call *propellers* or *screws* they call *wheels*; the former two would not be strange, but fancy, words to them. Boards they attach with brackets to the sterns of their boats (especially round sterns) to extend the waterline and prevent sinkage when moving fast are variously called *settling boards*, *squat boards*, *wing boards* or *wings*, the preference of Tangiermen, and *fans*. The decks of workboats are *decks* and *washboards*, the most common term. A five-inch board that is attached to the hold side of the washboard to prevent

water from going inside is a *raising*, but generally a *coaming* for others. The false bottoms of the boats are called *flooring* and *ceiling*. The grapnel, a kind of anchor with several flukes, is called a *grappling iron* or *hook* or *anchor*. Navigation lights are *side lights* or *running lights*. A shelter at the bow is a *cabin*; if it has cockpit on top of it, it is called a *boobie top* or *boobie house*. The watermen's foul weather gear is generally called *oilskins*. The Islanders also use the common *fore* and *aft*, respectively the front and rear of the boat. A small outboard motor used to be called a *stern engine* and by some a *kicker*. *Sculling*, a common method years ago for propelling a small skiff or bateau, is performed by the twisting left to right of a long, flat, tapered paddle about six inches wide at water's end on a rounded stanchion or post attached to the stern. The name for a block-and-tackle rig or any mechanical device for raising or hoisting (oysters, for example) is *heister*.

Now I will turn to the marine life in the Chesapeake Bay. Clams in the Bay come in many different shapes and sizes, but our concern is with the commercial clams, which are known as the *soft-shelled clam* or the *hard-shelled clam*, commonly reduced to *soft clam* and *hard clam*. They are known also as the *long-necked clam* and the *little-necked clam*, respectively. The former New Englanders call "the clam" or "steamer." Many along the Bay use the Indian name *manninose* or *manynose*. Other variants are *mano*, *mannose*, and *manos*, the words Tangiermen prefer and use. The shorter forms are what are commonly heard among watermen. Some call them *piss clams*, and the larger ones used for fishing for black and red drum they call *skipper clam*. As food, the soft-shelled clam has not caught on in the Lower Bay.

Hard clams have a variety of names. *Round clam*, *quahog*, *quohog*, and *cohog*, common in the Northeastern areas, are seldom heard in the Virginia area or the lower Maryland area of the Bay. Some retailers of Virginia's Eastern Shore use *quahog*, as do marine biologists from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in their fishery statistics. Most watermen say that they had never heard the term along the Bay; some, however, indicated that they knew that it was a "Yankee" name for clams.

Cherrystone, which gave us, I am told, the place-name *Cheriton* in Northampton County on the Eastern Shore, seems to be common along the Atlantic Seaboard and elsewhere, probably because they are sold as cocktail clams in restaurants. The "cherrystone" in Virginia to clam dealers and clammers is now a two- or three-inch clam that is most frequently sold in restaurants raw on the half shell. Judging from recent marketing practices, one would have to

conclude that the cherrystone clam is getting bigger by the year. What were called "cherrystones" sometime ago are now called *top necks* and *little necks*, which are smallest marketable clams and are the most expensive. Watermen call these *top nicks* and *little nicks*, respectively. Large hard clams are called *chowder clams*, *ocean clams*, *bay clams*, or *sea clams*. Since Tangiermen have never depended upon clamming as a livelihood, they seldom speak of the variety of sizes of clams as other than just *clams*.

Of the fisheries along the Bay, as indicated earlier, oystering is probably the oldest. Oysters are caught by *hand tongs*, *nippers* or *paws* (small tongs), *patent tongs*, and *dredges*, or *drudges*, as watermen call them. Other parts of the Bay call nippers *coving tongs*, perhaps from the architectural "curving inward." The oyster beds are called *oyster grounds*. The natural or state-managed beds are called *rocks* or *public rocks*, as opposed to the river bottoms leased by seafood dealers and others from the Commonwealth, which are called *private grounds*. An attempt to catch oysters by any means is a *lick*, and a load of oysters is called a *jag* of oysters.

As mentioned earlier for another purpose, if a waterman sells to a buyer *on shore* or *on land*, he sells to an *oyster house*, or afloat, to a *buy boat*, *run boat*, or *market boat*. In unloading oysters, he *puts out*, and the count in bushels is *tallied* by a *tallyman* on a *tally-board*. An immature or baby oyster is a *spat* or *strike*, because it *strikes* or attaches itself to shells or other oysters or other things, even artificial reefs and discarded automobile tires. On the oyster rock, if he is *tonging*, the oysterman anchors his boat lightly off the bottom by a *pig iron* or *drag iron*, whether the anchor is a piece of iron or a cinder block.

The quality of oysters after being *shucked* is either *fat*, *clear*, or *poor*. Oysters that are cavities, that is, shells without live oysters, are called *boxes* and *cluckers* or *clunkers*. Of the two words *clunker* and *clucker*, the one the Islanders, along with *box*, most frequently use, *clunker*, makes more sense. It is derived from *clunk*, with the sense of emitting a hollow or empty sound or something having an empty space or cavity. This, then, means that the Islanders' use of *clucker* is probably a mispronunciation or modified by folk etymology. If the cavities do not have mud in them, they are *new boxes*; if they do, they are *old boxes*. *Snaps* are long, narrow oysters that are difficult to open. At the oyster houses, oysters are *shucked* and *canned*—whether in jars, cans, or plastic containers—and are sold as *soups* or *stews* (small), *counts* (extra large), *extra select* (large), *selects* (medium-size), and *standard* (small). Some years ago, they were called *small*, *standard*, and *select*, a simplicity lost because of

enterprising merchants. Oysters come from the private grounds and rocks in various shapes and sizes, but in the shells they are not graded and do not, consequently, have names like clams.

The word *drudging*, a technique for catching oysters—and in the winter, crabs—deserves elaboration. Perhaps in all occupations or endeavors, words and phrases are sometimes used in odd senses or are pronounced differently. People outside these activities tend to think of the terms or expressions as quaint or rustic, amusing or eccentric, but more often as bad and uneducated, and to attribute the usage to the ignorance of the speaker. Such a usage is *drudging* for *dredging*. One often finds, however, that the usage is not due to ignorance but merely to the retention of an older form. The *OED* shows that the "dredging of oysters" goes back as far as 1471 and that *drudge* appears in the *London Gazette* as early as 1709. Variant forms *dreg*, *dregge*, *drudge*, and *druge* are all verb forms associated with the collecting and bringing up of oysters, but *drudging* is the usual term among watermen.

Another important fishery of the Chesapeake Bay is fishing. Fish come in great numbers and great varieties; many are known only to marine biologists. Only a few are of commercial interest to watermen: *spot*, *trout*, *drum*, *croaker*, *bluefish*, *striped bass*, *herring*, *shad*, *flounder*, *mullet*, and *menhaden* plus a few others. They are now mainly caught by a *pound net*—except for menhaden, which are caught by a rather sophisticated fleet of large boats and *purse nets*. Other nets, however, are used: *haul seines*, *drift nets*, *gill nets*, and *trawl nets*. The pound net is called the *pound trap*, *fish trap*, *fish pound*, and *pound fyke*. In Poquoson, Virginia, if the pound net is set up in the Bay, it is called a *bay net;* if in the river, a *fyke*.[17] The term *fyke* for a pound net or for the baglike section of it is not widely used along the Bay. Those who use this means of fishing are called *pound netters*, *fish trappers*, or, on Tangier, *trappers*.

Most fish, even those of different species, look pretty much the same to outsiders. Yet, even watermen and sportsmen would be amazed at the variety of fish in the Chesapeake Bay. Even when there is some scientific reason for making distinctions, marine biologists and watermen alike are not always able to do so and to agree on the criteria. It has been said that "every self-respecting dialect abhors exact synonymy." This observation is true among the watermen along the Bay. The *croaker*, a member of the drum family that includes spot, trout, red drum, and black drum, to name a few, is known commonly also as the *hardhead*. Other names are *grumbler* and *growler*, not well known. The small variety of the croaker is

called the *pinhead*. People in villages along the Rappahannock River called it the *kingbilly*. Another term for it is the *roundhead*, one also used for a variety of mullet on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. A colorful fish is the *puffer*, two kinds of which are found in the Bay: the northern puffer and the striped burrfish. In addition to *puffer*, there are other names: *swellfish*, *spiney fish* or *spiney toad*, *thorntoad*, and *blowfish*, *sugar toad*, or *swelltoad*, the last three of which are most commonly used by watermen. In restaurants they are called *sea squabs* and *chicken of the sea*. Another kind of toadfish, a very ugly one, is the *brown toad* or *oyster toad*, as they are called.

The flatfish of the Chesapeake Bay are generally called *flounder*. Scientists distinguish winter flounder, summer flounder, blackcheck tonguefish, windowpane, and hogchoker. Watermen speak of *flounder* and *hogchoker*. The larger variety of flounder is sometimes called the *floormat* or *doormat* for obvious reasons. The name of the hogchoker—the most abundant, small and bony, and useless for food—comes, the story goes, from earlier times when farmers fed them to hogs, which had a hard time swallowing them because of their bony bodies. The small sandbar shark, an occasional visitor, is variously called *dog shark, dogfish*, and *sand shark*.

The *bluefish*, the most voracious predator in the Bay and probably its greatest game fish, is variously called the *blue*, *snapper*, *taylor blue*, *chopper*, and *skipjack*—the source, some say, for the term *skipjack* used for the sailing dredge boat. Around Norfolk and Virginia Beach they are facetiously, but meaningfully, called *Virginia Beach piranha*. The *mullet* is a common fish but appears only now and then in the Bay. Years ago, it was the bread-and-butter fish along the coast because it could be smoked. In the Bay there are essentially two kinds: the *white mullet* and the *striped mullet*. Names for the former are *sand mullet*, *sea mullet*, *Virginia mullet*, *roundhead*, *kingfish*, *king mullet*, and *whiting*; for the latter, *black mullet, popeye mullet*, and *jumping mullet*. A great game and food fish in the Bay is the *striped bass*, known as *striper*, *rockfish*, and *rock* among watermen and sportsmen.

Some other varieties of fish, in addition to having some interesting names, provide some unique examples for a range of concerns for those in dialect study. A favorite fish for both the commercial and recreational fishermen is the *trout* or *sea trout*, known also on the Atlantic coast and elsewhere as the *weakfish* or *squeteague*; the latter is thought to be an Algonquian word for "trout" in southeastern New England. Neither *weakfish* nor *squeteague* is generally used along the Chesapeake Bay, particularly the lower half. William

Labov points out an interesting occurrence of using the name *squeteague* in the marketing of "trout":

> The name seems to have discouraged sales among consumers, and it was changed to *weakfish* in the thirties. It seems a poor choice in hindsight, and the commercial standing of this fish did not improve as a matter of fact. But when the name was changed to *sea trout*, it began to sell and the demand has not yet slackened.[18]

The two varieties popular in the Bay are the *sea trout* and the *spotted trout*. The former is, in addition to *sea trout*, also called the *gray trout*, *ocean trout*, or just plain *trout*. The other is known in the Bay as the *speckled trout*. Watermen on Tangier have always called this spotted variety the *salmon trout*, which I have heard only from watermen who probably do not know that the sea trout and speckled trout are not trout and belong to the family Salmonidae.

The *porgy*, a commercial fish from Cape Cod south and one that provides some fun for recreational bottom fishing, is a large family, including the *scup* and the *sheepshead*, both of which are found in the lower Bay. "Scup," though sometimes listed with "porgy" in fishing statistics, is generally known in the lower Bay region. Most watermen, including Tangiermen, called them *porgy*, a name generally reserved for the larger variety. The smaller variety, which can be a nuisance bottom fishing when other varieties are plentiful and fun when they are not, are called by Poquoson fishermen *nellie hunts* or *pin cushions*, names not known on Tangier. Sheepshead are larger and are distinctive with vertical stripes or "prison stripes," the reason some have called them *convict fish*. They are almost exclusively called *sheepshead*. Worth noting is that *scup* and *porgy* are Indian derivations, from *skuppaug*, with the first syllable *skup* providing the New England form *scup*, and the second, *paug*, the Middle Atlantic states *porgy*.[19] A smaller fish that resembles the porgy in shape, but is more colorful, is the *pigfish*, known also as the *hogfish*, a member of the "grunting" family. Though this is a highly edible fish, even better than spot or trout to some, the Islanders seldom, if ever, eat it, and consider it a "trash fish." No other names for this fish exist, and there are no clear distributions of it along the Bay.

A regular visitor to the lower Bay is the *tautog*, known as the *blackfish* in northern areas, which has come to be called *tog* among those who fish for it. Tangier watermen are familiar with it, but the Islanders, as a rule, have no knowledge of it as a food source. *Black-*

fish is a name used in the lower Bay, but for the *sea bass*. The smaller varieties of these are called *black wills* by Tangier watermen.

When it comes to *shad*, *herring*, and *menhaden*, marine biologists and watermen all meet confusion, for as Tangiermen say, "They are all kin together." Shad and herring are so much alike that only a seasoned waterman and a skilled marine biologist can accurately and consistently tell them apart. This can also be said about some members of the herring family and the menhaden, which are responsible for one of the oldest and largest fisheries along the Atlantic coast. *Shad* and *herring* are derived from Old English words, *sceadd* and *haering*, respectively. *Menhaden* is a corrupted or cognate form of the Narragansett Indian word *munnawhatteaug*, meaning "a fish somewhat like a herring" or "a fish that manures," for the Indians used them for fertilizer.[20] Watermen tend to speak of just *shad* (*roe shad* or *buck shad*) and *herring*. Two species of herring are found in the Bay: one the *branch herring* and the other the *blueback* or *glut herring*—both of which are called *alewife*, a word of confusing etymology as well as one watermen use confusingly. It is not the Old English *alewife* in the sense of a woman, but more likely it is derived from the French *alose*, which stands for a fish of the herring family. The *OED* suggests that it might be a corrupted form from the seventeenth century *aloofe*, perhaps an Indian name. The differences among these fish are quite subtle, and the names as they are used are even more confusing.

Menhaden is a commercial fish used for fertilizer, oils, paints, animal food, and cosmetics. Along the Bay the word *menhaden* is the most recognizable form, and the word is also used on Long Island Sound. The New England coastal area uses *pogy*, an Algonquian name. The menhaden are also known as *mossbunker* (Northern form), *bunker*, *bigeyes*, *skipjacks*, *fatbacks*, *bugfish*, *yellowtail*, and, according to marine biologists, confusingly as *alewives*. *Bunkers* and *alewives*, with variants *elwives* and *o'wise*, are common along the Bay. *Fatback*, *bugfish*, and *yellowtail* are North Carolina coastal terms. It is interesting to note that in Virginia, even though watermen would not distinguish *alewives* and *menhaden*, Virginia fishery statistics do keep them apart. The use of *menhaden* for *alewives* would be fancy talk; for that matter, a Tangierman's use of *alewives* would be fancy, for he speaks of the fish as *o'wise* or *o'wives*. He knows *menhaden*, *bunker*, *bigeye*, *alewives*, and its variation *elwives*, but he would rarely use those terms. *Fatback*, the common word in coastal North Carolina, and

the other terms would probably be known to some Islanders who have worked on the menhaden fleets from Reedville, Virginia.

Of all the fisheries, the crabbing one has the richest, most colorful, and most unusual vocabulary. It ranges from the Islanders' scatological *shiteater* to the classical *callinectes sapidus*, the "beautiful savory swimmer." Much of the vocabulary applies to the sex and growth of the crab, which moults or *sheds*, the term watermen use, over its lifetime eighteen to twenty-three times to maturity, each time shedding an exoskeleton, or a hard shell. After the last larval stage and for each stage following the first adult stage, the waterman has a term. The *callinectes sapidus*, a beautifully colored crustacean with bright blue claws, is known simply as the *crab* or *hard crab* or *jimmie* by watermen and the *blue crab*, *channel crab, channeler*, and *Atlantic blue crab* by others. The blue crab is both hard-shelled and soft-shelled. The names above generally apply to the hard crab; the soft-shelled variety is known simply as *softshells*. Most watermen, however, call them *soft crabs, softs*, or, intimately, *softies*.

The sex of the blue crab is easily recognized by the different shapes of the *apron* of the abdomen, or *belly*, the waterman's term. A wife of a Tangier waterman once pointed out in a meeting that the apron of the female crab had a likeness of the United States capitol and that of the male crab, the Washington Monument, an observation not too far fetched. The male crabs watermen call *jimmies*, *jimmy-dicks*, or just plain *dicks*. Some say *he-crabs*. *Channelers,* another word for them, is found almost exclusively in scientific papers. Young females are called *sally crabs*; the adult female, *she-crab* or *sook*, which some take to be a twist on "sow." When they mate, the marine biologists say that the jimmie *cradle-carries* the female crab. While the jimmie is mating or cradle-carrying the female, watermen call the pair a *doubler*, the most common term, or a *buck-and-rider*, *rider*, *doubles*, and *jimmie-and-his-wife*. After mating, when the egg laying results in an egg mass (a mass of eggs released by female crabs and under the apron attached to the belly of the crab), which is yellow and brown or a bright orange in color, the egg-bearing female crabs or *sooks* are called *sponge crabs*, *brood crabs*, *cushion crabs*, *lemons*, *orange crabs*, *berry* or *berried crabs*, *ballie*, *punks*, *busted crabs*, or *busted sooks*. Of all the names mentioned, *softcrab*, *jimmie*, *doubler*, *sook*, and *lemon* are the most frequently used on Tangier.

Earlier, it was noted that blue crabs increase in size by moulting, or *shedding*. In shedding, a new shell is formed beneath the hard, outer shell. The crab changes from a hard crab to a soft crab

through several stages. Watermen who market them must know these stages because their financial success depends on a careful *culling* of them. The terms for these stages vary among watermen; the interesting thing is that even marine biologists, who are usually given to scientific vocabulary, use these terms, and, for that matter, many of those already listed.

A number of signs can be used to detect the different stages of shedding. The one the watermen use is the fine hair color lines along the outer edges of the swimming paddles, or *backfins*. Crabs showing these signs are called *peelers*, I guess for obvious reasons. The lines range from a light white to a dark red. White-rim crabs, in the first stage, are commonly called *green peelers*, the most common term among Tangier crabbers, or *green crabs*, *white line crabs*, *white sign crabs*, *snots*, or *fat crabs*. For a crab not showing the white line or faintly so, Tangiermen use *shiteater*, not that they eat shit but that they are worthless—which means that they are not likely to shed and to be profitable. For the next stage, the pink-rim stage, the peelers are called *pink lines*, *pink signs*, *seconds*, or *mediums*, the preferred name of the Islanders. Peelers in the third, or red-rim stage are called *red lines*, *red signs*, *red peelers*, *ripe peelers*, or *rank peelers*, the last of which is the most common term among watermen. Some watermen along the Bay call only a crab in this last stage, the *rank* stage (the description Tangiermen use) a *peeler*, but generally any crab showing any of these color lines is called a *peeler*.

When the shedding starts, the underside of the crab shell at the ends cracks along definite lines. At this stage the crab is called a *cracked buster* or *buster* or *buster-line crab*. The crab from this stage will eventually back out of its shell to become a soft crab. Should the crab die at this point, it is called a *still* or simply a *dead crab*, or a *dead buster*. Years ago, watermen would either throw these overboard (away) or take them home to eat. Now they market them as they do those that shed successfully. Some shedders even market them as *bag crabs*. In Louisiana, crab shedders call these *buster softcrabs* or *buster crabs*. Antoine's sells them as a delicacy, I am told, for 75 percent more than the regular crabs.

The soft crabs over several hours will begin to "straighten out" or harden until they have a papery or leathery texture. The crab at this point is generally called a *buckram* by Tangiermen. Variations are *buckler*, *bucky*, and *buckly*. *Papershell* is also heard, but it is a word that comes mostly from the mouths of landlubbers. *Papershell* and *buckram* are synonymous for most watermen. Some, however, use *papershell* for a crab nine to twelve hours after shedding and

buckram for one twenty-two to twenty-four hours after shedding. When the crab first becomes hard, it is not of great market value because it is not *fat*, meaning, if cooked, its body cavity would not be solidly packed. *White-belly*, *snowball*, and *snowbelly* are names for this crab; Tangiermen say that such a crab is *bucky*. Large, fat jimmies are called *primes* or *number one crabs*. What remains from the culling of these is called *trash*.

Some years ago, soft crabs were sold as *primes* and *jumbos*—that is, based on their size beginning at three inches, the legal size. Today they are called *primes*, *hotel primes*, *mediums*, *jumbos*, *whales*, and *slabs* again, perhaps as a result of the economic ingenuity of the marketing industry. Some claim that the last three are different, perhaps in fractions of inches, but most say they are the same. The picked body crabmeat from jimmies was traditionally marketed as *regular* and *backfin* or *lump*. Today *special* is used for the stringy portions of the body, *lump* for what was called regular, *backfin* and *jumbo backfin* for the backfin portions. In packing the soft crabs for sale, crabbers used to use dried eelgrass, which they called *seaweed* and *sea ore,* perhaps corrupted forms of *sea oats*. Tangiermen called them *sea o's*. Years ago, before refrigerated trucks, they shipped hard crabs in a basket with the limbs and leaves of a bush, a kind of myrtle, that grew near the water, which they call *gall bushes* and *water bushes*.

Through the years, crabs have been caught by various means: *netting*, *handline-dipnetting*, *mudlarking*, *progging*, *push-netting*, *shirttailing*, *drag-netting*, *the hand-dip trotline*, *patent-dip trotline*, *summer scraping*, *winter dredging*, *peeler pots*, *peeler traps*, and *crab pots*. All but *scraping*, *dredging* or *drudging*, *trapping*, and *potting*, as they are called, are things of the past and never were able to make crabbing a major business. Of the terms, *mudlarking*, *progging*, and *shirttailing* are the most interesting. The first is used for a crabber who wades at low tide around muddy shorelines looking for peelers and softcrabs. I seriously doubt that this term is known outside the families of Tangier watermen. The *OED* lists its meaning as "one who dabbles, works, or lives in mud." The citations, which range from 1796 to 1894, clearly show that it was used for someone who was prowling or wading around ships at low tide looking for anything one could find. *Progging*, a term reaching back to the early seventeenth century in England, had earlier meanings of "poling about," "picking things up," and "seeking victuals by wandering and begging." On Tangier, *progging*, like *mudlarking*, refers to wading around the shorelines, but, instead of for crabs, for clams and oysters, usually with a stick. *Shirttailing* is

a term also for wading along shorelines, but with a handled net for catching crabs. On Tangier, this is called *shoving* or *push-netting*. *Scraping* is done in *crab scrapers*, *barcats*, *Jenkins Creekers*, or *Jenkins Creek catboats*, as the boats are variously called. The scrape, as mentioned earlier, is a framed dredge with a rope-and-chain bag without raked teeth. Dredging, or *drudging*, is done in the winter with bigger boats with heavier dredges, or *drudges*, with raked teeth.

Crabbers also used a poundlike device for catching peelers. It is used close to shore, has a hedge, a bay, and a wire box. Along the Bay, it is called a *peeler trap*, *peeler pound*, *crab trap*, *crab pound*, or *crab fyke*. Tangiermen are familiar with all the terms but generally use *peeler trap*. *Potting* or *crab potting* applies to the use of crab pots. As described before, these pots are cubical in shape, two feet on all sides, made out of 1½-inch mesh wire. They usually have two funnels, *upstairs* and *downstairs* sections, and a *bait box*, *bait bucket*, *bait cup*, or *bait well*, as they are variously called. At a certain time, unbaited crab pots are used to catch only peelers; thus they are called *peeler pots* because of the prey. A crabber goes *potting* and *fishes* or *fishes up* his crab pots, which form either a *row* or *line*. Smith Islanders, and those to the north, tend to speak of a *line of pots*, and Tangier Islanders, just ten miles away, tend to say a *row of pots*. Live wells on their boats are called *live boxes*.

The practice of shedding crabs is done in *shedding houses*, *crab sheds*, *crab houses*, or *crab shanties*. Places like Smith Island and Tangier Island have stilt-supported houses or sheds in the creeks or harbors. They generally use *crab house* or *crab shanty*. Other crab shedders shed crabs on docks, on shore, and even in their backyards. Those who do so in their backyards are called *backyard shedders*, something like shade-tree mechanics. Before the shedding process became mechanized, peelers were shedded in slatted floats in the creeks and coves. These were, and still are, called *crab floats* or *shedding floats*. Most watermen today shed their crabs on shore or on docks in rectangular boxes or containers with saltwater being pumped through continuously. These are called *tanks*, *vats*, or *floats*, even though they no longer float in the water. Most watermen use *float* because they, as a rule, "know what they mean" and are likely to say "I don't give a damn where they are, they're *floats*."

Crabs usually start shedding in the spring and go on doing so throughout the summer. During this shedding period, there have historically been two times when the shedding is great. The first is the *May rush* or *run*; and the second, the *August rush* or *run*. So that peelers will not injure each other in the floats, the crabbers

used to *break* them or *nick* them, which means that they would break the movable pincer of those claws. Because crab scientists discovered that "nicking" these crabs creates opportunities for them to get infected, the crabbers do not break them anymore. If a softcrab during shedding loses its large claws, it is called by some a *buffalo crab* or a *doorknob*. If a peeler loses one or both of its claws and they grow back as soft nubs, they are called *Jew claws*, *peeler nubs*, *limbbuck*, or *cherry nubs*, the choice of Tangier watermen. Periodically, during the day and night, a crab shedder has to cull the peeler floats, a process he calls *fishing-up*. If crabs eat certain kinds of marine bottom animals, they may put off a strong unpleasant odor, for which they are called *ticky crabs*, possibly because the odor is similar to that of bedbugs or bed ticks.

What, then can be said about the vocabulary of the watermen of the Chesapeake Bay? To begin with, it is, for the most part, truly indigenous. There is very little that is of European origin; it is the result of American culture—even the sailing craft and workboats—and it characterizes a particular region. Early influences are there, of course: *alewife*, *bateau*, *drudge*, *mudlarking*, *progging*, *fyke*, *menhaden*, *bunker*; but they are few. Most of the words as used are localized and of relatively recent origin. Having said that, no one is yet ready to determine the first uses of these words or by whom, where, and when.

Given that the vocabulary is essentially of American origin, was it brought to the Bay area from the "outside"? There are some reasons for thinking that it might have had some outside influence. The outermost Atlantic communities for a good bit of their existence have had more contact with each other than with the states to which they belong; there was early New England contact—and even contact from shipping with the West Indies. For many years the watermen of the Bay have fished in different states and up and down the coast. Some of the words, of course, would be familiar to watermen all along the coast—*menhaden*, *sea trout*, *cherrystone*, *pound*, for example. However, *quahog*, *pogy*, and *scup* are not generally used along the coast. *Fatback* for *menhaden* in North Carolina is little known in the Bay area. *Bunker* and *alewives*, and the Tangier "*o'wise*," are used in the Bay, apparently more than anywhere else.

The vocabulary surrounding the sex, growth, and marketing of crabs, again apparently, originated in the Bay area, though crabbing is a fishery from New Jersey to Texas. Watermen from Tangier have been instrumental in helping other states, such as Texas, develop crab fisheries. All in all, watermen all along the coast can talk with

each other, but they frequently ask, "What do you mean by this?" It has been my experience, then, that watermen outside the Bay area know the terms of the Bay, even though they frequently have their own for the same thing, but Chesapeake watermen in many cases do not know the terms outside the Bay area. In short, it does not look as if the Bay area has been greatly influenced from the outside.

With regard to mixture and meaning, there are many instances, of course, of words for the same thing: *croaker* and *hardhead* for the fish that grunts; *jumbo*, *whale*, and *slab* for the large softcrab; *alewife* and *bunker* for the menhaden; the different words for mullet, peelers, pound nets, peeler traps, cavitation plates, and so on. All of these seem to exist side by side, but it is hard to say whether they are equally prominent in a person's mind or mouth. Earlier, I stated that "dialects abhor exact synonymy" and, as a result, people abandon a word or two in favor of another or develop a distinction of some kind in meaning. Ninety-five percent of the words mentioned here I have known since I was a "wharf rat," running up and down the docks of the Rappahannock and the Chesapeake. None, to my knowledge, has been abandoned or has even receded in use. There are instances where words for the same thing have developed, I think, two meanings. *Papershell* and *buckram* to most watermen still mean the same thing, but the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS) in some of its publications uses them for different things, as stated earlier. Whether watermen do remains a question. The same situation exists with *jumbos*, *whales*, and *slabs*. The distinctions may be more an act of exploitation by seafood dealers than distinctions made by watermen.

Instances of one word for a number of things are numerous: *skiff*, *bateau*, *deadrise*, *oilskins*, *waterman*, *peeler*, *coaming*, *roundhead*, to name some. There are even words that are touched by folk etymology or corruption: *o'wise*, for *alewives*, *sook* for *sow*, *mano* for *manninose*, *bowsplit* for *bowsprit*, and *sea o's* for *sea oats*.

There are some words that, if not lost, remain only in memory and only in that of older Bay people: *ram*, *pungy*, *bugeye*, and *cuno*, even *mudlarking*, *progging*, and *trotline*. They have disappeared because the craft and practice no longer exist. Social factors may, of course, account for *niggerhead* for *capstan*, *cleat*, or *samson post*. The number of obsolete terms is small because the fisheries are relatively young and have not undergone sufficient change to warrant replacement and innovation. In addition, even though some techniques are favored more than others, almost all of them are used at one time or another.

The kenning (a metaphorical name, usually a compound, of something) lives, it seems, in *skipjack*, *bugeye*, *catboat*, *barcat*, and *washboards*. If not kennings, at least, they are picturesque metaphorical compounds of some sort having direct relevance to the working lives of watermen.

Finally, what about spread and influence of features within the Bay area and those outside of it? It is hard to speak confidently about these matters. The major portion of the vocabulary that has been listed is known by watermen all along the Bay, but localisms do exist. *Bunkers* for *menhaden* is heard more on the Western Shore than on the Eastern Shore, where *alewives*, *elwives*, or *o'wise* seem to prevail. Smith Islanders use a *line of pots;* most Virginia watermen tend to speak of a *row of pots*. For the scrape boat, Marylanders tend to use *Jenkins Creekers* or *cat boats*, whereas Tangiermen use *barcats*. As far as I know now, *crab fyke* is used only around Poquoson, Virginia. These are a few, but there are others. To determine words peculiar to a single community is difficult, but it is clear that terms and meanings differ, sometimes sharply, in various regions of the Bay.

Undoubtedly, the Chesapeake Bay fisheries are crucially important as the source for terms. One of them, shedding softcrabs, has influenced the practices of other states, some of which are just beginning to get into it full swing. From this, one would expect that the relative newcomers would accept not just the practices, techniques, and gear but the terminology as well. To some extent it is true. *Peeler*, *buster*, and the terms for the sign reading of the peelers, for example, have been taken over by South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, but for many of the terms they are developing different uses and meanings. In 1979, representatives from VIMS and selected watermen helped conduct a workshop in South Carolina on the softcrab business. Representatives were from Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Louisiana. It is not surprising that they had little difficulty understanding each other, but one is struck by how frequently there were calls for the repeating and clarifying of terms and the offering of explanations even after some years in the business. Many of their responses were marked by "what we call" or "what is called," which shows their awareness of the developments of distinctions. The representative from Louisiana, for example, commented about *green crabs*: "Now, before I go any further, I want to point out a difference in terminology used there. We don't use the term *peeler*, and if you say the word *peeler*, in front of someone down there, they know what you mean, but it's not used extensively."[21] Chesapeake

Bay terms, then, have spread to other areas, but some of these terms are obviously being changed to suit conditions and bent of mind.

Thus runs the vocabulary of the watermen of the Chesapeake Bay. What is here is only a handful of what is there. The watermen's life is not easy, and it, too, is becoming harder and harder. They are very tough, independent, and determined people. Things are changing for them, however—perhaps through their own fault, that of others, or just that of nature. They are good at what they do, even experts at it. Yet, the efficiency of all of the fisheries may not be enough. The future is cloudy and problematic. The biggest threat to their way of life and way of speech, strange as it may seem, could be the inefficiency of all the aspects of the fisheries to protect and harvest the resources of the sea—which means, of course, that they could possibly be replaced by aquaculture farms managed by highly trained experts. Should that happen, the charm, beauty, and spirit of the waterman and his language could become relics.

Names

Surnames

Today, any long list of American surnames, whether telephone directories, necrologies, or credit lines of movies, would show that most of them are not British, a fact that some would find hard to believe. For Tangier, however, all of the surnames are British and have been as far as records show. For 1820, only six surnames existed for the population of 73: Crockett, Parks, Pruitt, Paul, Shores, and Thomas. The tax lists before 1921 show that 358 of the 490 recorded had one or the other of the following names: Crockett, Charnock, Dies (Dize), Parks, Pruitt, Shores, Thomas, Wheatley, or Williams. The other 132 had one of the following: Autry, Baker, Benson, Bowden, Bradshaw, Brown, Chambers, Clark, Cooper, Corbitt, Daley, Davis, Eskridge, Evans (Evins), Gordy, Haynie, Kelly, Keyser (Keaser), Killman, King, Laird, Landing, Landon, Lord, Marshall, McCready, Moore, Murphy, Payne, Rayfield, Scott, Smith, Spence, Stringle, Sturgeon, Thorn (Thorne), Wallace, Walter, or Angle (pronounced Angel). Names current today are Angle, Autry, Bowden, Bradshaw, Charnock, Clark(e), Cooper, Crockett, Daley, Davis, Dias, Dise, Dize, Eskridge, Evans, Gordy, Haynie, King, Landon, Laird, Marshall, McCready, McMann, Moore, Parks, Pruitt, Shores, Smith, Thorne, Thomas, Wheatley, and Williams.

Crockett, Dise, Parks, and Pruitt remain the predominant surnames on Tangier today.

First Names

All name study is interesting, but the study of first names can be fascinating, even if only done from a historical and statistical perspective. People like to know where their names come from and how popular they have been through the years. Years ago in France and Germany, parents could not just give children any names they wanted to. They had to select from an approved list of acceptable names if they wanted their children to be officially recognized.[22] In England and America, however, there are no restrictions, but for a long time there have been certain tendencies. Since the Norman Conquest up until relatively recent times the following male names in order of popularity have been the most numerous: *John*, *William*, *Charles*, *James*, *George*, *Robert*, *Thomas*, *Henry*, *Joseph*, and *Edward*. For females, they have been *Mary*, *Elizabeth*, *Barbara*, *Dorothy*, *Helen*, *Margaret*, *Ruth*, *Virginia*, *Jean*, and *Frances*.[23] For both males and females, some of these names, not in the order given here, regularly appeared in the top-ten lists. However, about thirty years or so ago very few names retained their popularity; they seemed to be greatly influenced by fashion. For 1982, the most popular male names in numerical order in the United States were *Michael*, *Christopher*, *Matthew*, *David*, *Jason*, *Daniel*, *Robert*, *Eric*, *Brian*, and *Joseph*. For females, they were *Jennifer*, *Sarah*, *Nicole*, *Jessica*, *Katherine*, *Stephanie*, *Elizabeth*, *Amanda*, *Melissa*, and *Lindsay*.[24] Over the years, there has been greater variation in girls' names than in boys' names.

From year to year, naming practices on Tangier are not greatly different from those generally in the United States. The names that appear for both boys and girls in top-ten lists have occurred on Tangier but not with the same order of popularity. Some parents have named their children after popular preachers and doctors, whereas years ago biblical names were very popular. As on the mainland, they follow the fashions of the times in sports and Hollywood, but the number of names is not so great that it becomes conspicuous. The following list, from 1807 to 1998, is representative: Ada, Addie, Addison, Adelle, Adney, Adrian, Adrin, Albert, Alex, Alexander, Alfred, Alice Faye, Allene, Alvin, Andrew, Andy, Angela, Ann, Anna, Annie, Arther, Asbury, Ashby, Aubry, Audrey, Austin, Avery; Barbara, Barney, Barry, Beatrice, Beulah, Ben, Benjamin, Bertie, Bobby, Bernette, Bernice, Bertha, Beth, Betsy, Bette, Betlie,

Billy, Bookie, Bradley, Brady, Brandon, Brower, Bruce, Bryan, Buren; Cale, Calvin, Carl, Carlton, Carne, Carroll, Carol, Carson, Cary, Catherine, Clara, Clarke, Clarence, Cecil, Cecile, Celean, Charles, Charleston, Charlotte, Chloe, Chris, Christianna, Chuck, Clifton, Coby, Coley, Colson, Colton, Connie, Connor, Cora, Corda, Cordia, Cordie, Corinne, Cornelius, Cranston, Cutler, Cynthia; Dace, Daisy, Darsey, Dale, Dana, Danny, Darren, Darick, David, Dow, Diane, Della, Denise, Dennis, Dixie, Dollie, Dolly, Don, Donah, Donna, Donnie, Dora, Dorothy, Dottie, Douglas, Dustin; Earl, Earnest, Eddie, Edith, Edna, Edward, Edwin, Edwina, Effie, Eldora, Ella, Elias, Elisha, Eliza, Elizabeth, Ellie, Ellsworth, Elliott, Elmer, Elmira, Elta, Elva, Elwood, Ema, Emiline, Emily, Emory, Erwin, Essie, Estelle, Eugene, Eugena, Eula, Erina, Eva, Evelyn, Ewell; Ferninand, Fern, Filbert, Fletcher, Flora, Flowers, Florida, Flossie, Frances, Frank, Franklin, Fred, Freddie, Fuller, Furman; Gabriel, Garman, Gary, Gene, Genette, Genvia, George, Georgeanna, Georgia, Gladding, Gladstone, Gladys, Gordon, Gracey, Greg, Gregory, Grover; Halser, Hance, Hamson, Hanson, Harry, Harvie, Harlan, Harold, Harrison, Harry, Hattie, Hazel, Helnedon, Helena, Hellen, Hillory, Henry, Henrietta, Hester, Hettie, Hilda, Hiram, Hobson, Homer, Horace, Howard; Ida, Idabell, Idamac, Ignatius, Ignacious, Ina, Ines, Isdell, Ione, Iralee, Irwin, Isabell, Isiah, Issac, Iva; James, Jamie, Jan, Jane, Janice, Janie, Jeffrey, Jenne, Jennie, Jesse, Jimmie, Joan, Joann, Joe, John, Jona, Joshua, Joyce, Julia, June; Katie, Kelso, Kenneth, Kim, Kitty; Larry, Laura, Lavena, Laverne, Lawrence, Lawson, Lazarus, Leah, Leane, Leanor, Lela, Leland, Leola, Leon, Leonora, Leroy, Levy, Lewis, Lilian, Liza, Lizzie, Lon, Lorenzo, Lorraine, Lottie, Louise, Luay, Lucille, Lula, Lulabell, Lulie, Luther, Lyda, Lydia, Lylian; Mabel, Macey, Madue, Maggie, Mahlon, Major, Malinda, Malissa, Mande, Margaret, Mariah, Marianne, Marie, Mark, Marion, Marne, Martha, Mary, Matilda, Maudie, Maurice, McKenny, McKensy, Melvin, Merrel, Mernice, Michael, Michele, Mickey, Mildred, Millard, Millie, Milton, Mina, Minnie, Miranda, Missouri, Mitchell, Monnie, Morah, Murray, Myrtle; Nancy, Nannie, Naoma, Naomi, Nathan, Nathaniel, Neal, Nealie, Neda, Nedora, Nedra, Neily, Nellie, Nelson, Nerva, Neva, Nina, Noble, Nola, Nolan, Nona, Nora, Norman, Norris, Novella; Octavia, Oldham, Olevia, Olie, Ona, Oscar, Otho, Otis; Page, Parker, Partie, Pat, Patrick, Patty, Pearly, Peggy, Pettie, Phebe, Pinky, Polly, Preston, Priscilla; Rachel, Ralph, Ray, Raymond, Rebecca, Redell, Reuben, Richard, Riley, Rita, Roany, Robert, Roberta, Roland, Ronnie, Rosella, Ross, Rosy, Roy, Rudy, Rufus, Russell, Ruth; Sadie, Sally, Sam, Sandra, Sarie, Sess, Sev-

ern, Seward, Sewell, Seth, Seymour, Sheldon, Shelly, Sherman, Sherrol, Sheryl, Shirley, Sidney, Siegar, Smith, Sophia, Squire, Stanley, Stella, Stephen, Stevens, Stewart, Strickland, Sue, Sueanne, Susan, Sylvia; Taylor, Terry, Theresa, Thomas, Thresa, Tim, Tony, Traves, Travis, Tubman; Udella, Ulissus, Unie; Vaughan, Venie, Verdie, Vernie, Vernon, Vickie, Vienna, Viola, Virgia, Virgil, Virginia; Walter, Wanda, Warren, Wayne, Weldon, Wendy, Wesley, Weston, Wilfred, Will, Willard, William, Willie, Willis, Wilmer, Winfred, Wittington, Woodford, Wrandford, Wyatt; Yvonne; Zella, Zena, Zippa, and Zippy. The use of initials such as "A.J." for personal names is rare.

Unusual Names

The naming practice of giving unusual or bizarre names was visited upon Tangier, for the most part, in the earlier years, as the following names will show: Afarrel, , Albian, Ameial, Anchy, Annanias, Arabella, Archelus, Arminda, Arminta, Augie, Aventhy, Azaline, Babel, Banzie, Beaula, Begalie, Benja, Bernity, Berthel, Bornil, Brazora, Britan, Brittanna, Carsula, Carolina, Carral, Castella, Cedwin, Dasia, Deilda, Demusey, Dernie, Dilly, Docia, Eamie, Edlow, Elverta, Elvertie, Elvestina, Escrides, Estle, Ethelbert, Etta, Eufamy, Faughn, Floria, Gerevine, Gerona, Gwyndola, Hewart, Kittun, Lybrand, Mabia, Maga, Magareth, Mamary, Mannice, Marthella, Mathello, Maytie, Minta, Montina, Montinda, Orzi, Parmelia, Parthanna, Risdern, Rosza, Ruthanna, Sada, Sadonia, Shadie, Seary, Shafter, Sweina, Swinia, Thelbert, Triffie, Triphenia, Tuban, Valena, Venettie, Vigolia, Williemina, Zypora, Zyphorah, and Zachariah. Obvious here are compounding attempts at euphonious-sounding names, biblical names, and even Anglo-Saxon names.

Nicknames

Nicknaming is a time-honored practice in most communities and social groups worldwide. "Nickname," according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), is derived from *nekename*, a later form of Old English *ekename*, a compound of *eacen* (to increase) and *nama* (name). Earlier, the word *nick*, meaning "to cut into nicks," gave us the word *nicker*, seldom used today, with, among other meanings, the sense of someone who nicks (cuts) by naming a person in a pejorative way. Because nicknaming in some societies or groups is a way of disparaging someone, it may be that "nick"

has some relevance to *nekename* and *nickname*, for *nickname* is a shortened form or a replacement form, both for ridicule and for pleasant purposes. In fact, a *nicker* may be someone who is clever in creating nicknames, especially those that are cutting. For us now, *nickname* will be a name or appellation that is substituted for, added to, or shortened in some way.

In many societies, nicknaming is serious business, for it may "signify status, achievement, privilege, and meaningful social organization."[25] This is not the function of nicknaming in the Tangier community. Neither is it provocative, offensive, nor depreciative in nature. Nicknames are rare among girls and adult females. Though many nicknames are acquired in childhood in most societies, they are not on Tangier. They, moreover, have nothing to do with social acceptance—that is, as a badge of acceptance as, for example, "Bucky" operates on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. There, when a native addresses or greets you, an outsider, as "Bucky," you have socially arrived.

Much of Tangier nicknaming practice is closely tied to their sense of humor, the oddity they perceive in behavior or acts, and their penchant for harmless teasing. The following alphabetical list of nicknames on Tangier, if not exhaustive, is truly representative: Adso, Ahdoo, Aya, , Billy Boy, Billy Shoot, Binky, Blue Tail, Bookie, Brains, Bunky, Can Beans, Chorder, Clincher, Clown, D, Dickie, Dimps, Dipper, Dirty John, Fishey, Flapper, Flat, Fuzzy, Hambone, Hammer, Hoot, Hoss Apple (Two-Hoss, Three-Hoss), Hurricane, Hutal, Hutch, Idoo, Jolly Jim, Kail, Leff, Lighthouse, Little Feet, Loving Henry, Mister, Monk, Mooney, Nanner, Nicey, Nobe, Noinke, Number Nine, Oaker, Ollie, Ponk, Popcorn, Poug, Preacher, Puck, Putt-Putt, Sarge, Sassons, Sauce, Sausage, Sheek, Simple, Skronch, Socks, Sonny Boy, Spanky, Spike, Squaks, Squills, Suddie, Sultag, Swogs, Tabby, Time, Uger, Uncle Sam, White Nuts, Willie Stakes, and Yates.

All the nicknames on Tangier are names that replace given names, so much so that when Islanders hear the proper names of their fellow Islanders read in ceremonies, such as weddings, baptisms, or funerals, they are often surprised by the given names they hear. Nicknames originate here like those almost everywhere, from a person's appearance or dress, remarks that one has made or activities or incidents one has been associated with, or food or activities of which one is particularly fond. Some nicknames are obvious and others obscure. Some of these I have heard most of my life, but I have had difficulty learning the source of them. Upon asking the Islanders of various ages about the origin of these names, they are

at a loss about the origin and respond by saying, "That's all we called him, ever since I can remember."

Though I can not speak with certainty, my guess is that Big Daddy, Brains, Dimps, Dirty John, Fishey, Fuzzy, Jolly Jim, Lighthouse, Little Feet, Leff, Simple, and Socks all have their origins from some striking physical or mental feature. For example, Lighthouse, a nickname of a man I knew, had bright red hair. It was also said of him that he frequently could be seen with his boat tied up at lighthouses because of motor trouble. Another account centers on an incident when he was illegally dredging oysters and was accosted by a Maryland police craft, which showered him with tracer bullets, leaving a bright luminous trail, a happening that may have left him with his nickname because his fellow pirates teased him by saying that he was "lit-up like a lighthouse."

Can Beans, Hambone, Kail, Popcorn, Sauce, Sausage, and White Nuts, it would seem, have something to do with a person's fondness for or dislike of these items. Aya or Ahdoo are nicknames for an aunt and uncle of mine that originated from their younger brother's attempt to pronounce their given names, Ada and Andrew. Now over seventy, the man, when referring to his older siblings, still uses Aya and Ahdoo.

Binky, Blue Tail, Bookie, D, Dickie, Dipper, Flapper, Flat, Hammer, Hoot, Hutal, Hurricane, Hutch, Mister, Monk, Moonen, Tabby, Sultag, Nicey, Nobe, Noinke, Number Nine, Ottie, Ponk, Pouge, Puck, Sassons, Sheek, Skronch, Squaks, Squills, Suddie and Swoop are names of those whom I have known for years, but I could not find out why they were nicknamed such.

Hoss Apple is interesting—not its origin, for I do not know it—because Hoss Apple has two sons who are called Two-Hoss and Three-Hoss. Preacher would be a nickname that one would expect to have a relationship to the church or for a piety of some sort. No one seems to know. Billy Boy and Sonny Boy, it is clear, are affectionate names that were given when these two men were toddlers.

Loving Henry was a nickname given to a man named Henry when he was an adult. The story is that he used to shove a skiff from Tangier to Smith Island, about ten miles distant, to court a young lady. Until he died, few, if any, spoke of him as other than "Loving Henry."

Just recently, I met a young waterman from Tangier called Nanner at an environmental meeting. At the meeting others referred to him by this nickname, and he introduced himself as Nanner. From Nanner, whose given name is Phillip, I learned that he and his friend as school boys typically went home for lunch during which

he often telephoned his grandmother, whom he called Nana. His friend as a joke started calling him Nana's Nana and later dropped the reference to his grandmother and called him just Nana. Later, he became known as Nanner, a name he officially uses in his personal and business affairs, even in the telephone directory. Today, only a few know his given name.

Another nickname is *Billy Shoot* for Billy Parks. Many on the Island think he is Billy Shoot, not Billy Parks. An acquaintance of his, while fishing one day, out of the blue called him Billy Shoot, which stuck. As a result he is better known as 'Billy Shoot' than he is as 'Billy Parks.' Moreover, the Islanders even call his older son Billy Shoot.

I have mentioned several times that Tangiermen have a penchant for teasing or making fun of people, but in a pleasant way, and seem to pick up on anything and to keep it alive, sometimes even to *ad nauseam*. Such an incident gave birth to *Sarge*, which is in the making as a nickname. On a recent trip, I noticed my uncle, a great teaser, calling a woman Sarge, much to her dismay, everytime he saw her. Her response was, "How long are you going to keep calling me that?" I later asked him why he called her Sarge, and he said that one of the leaders in the church gave her a project or assignment, which she ramrodded through like a sergeant. It is likely that she will die with "Sarge" as her nickname.

In sum, then, the nicknaming practice on Tangier has little to do with the traditionally thought relationships of solidarity and social acceptance, social stratification, status, achievement, privilege, and other meaningful aspects of social organization. It has more to do with the quickness to perceive oddity and the tendency to tease in a good-natured way. Nicknames are, finally, numerous and popular and tend to stick with those having them so long that others forget the given names until they are sadly reminded of them in funerals and obituaries.

Place-Names

As one would expect, Tangier has few place-names. Normally, place-names provide a lot of information about towns and cities and their residents. I am sorry to say that this is not true of Tangier, but those that occur are not without interest. *Tangier* as a name comes first. The earliest mention that we know of is 1685, then 1713 and 1716. There is no official evidence to suggest who, when, and under what circumstances the Island, earlier known as *Russell Isles*, received its name. *Russell Isles* was given by Captain John

Smith to honor his physician. Local historians and journalists have written for years that Smith named it *Tangier* after his experiences in Morocco. John Neely Mears, an Eastern Shore historian, calls this a misnomer, for the Moroccans called their land *Tanja*, the name of a clay vessel they used for cooking. He goes on to say that Smith must have known about the clay or *tanja* in the making of the cooking vessels, and when he stepped ashore on what we now know as Tangier, he found Indian pottery that reminded him of that in Tangiers, Morocco—whereupon he renamed Russell Isles *Tangier*.[26] Of course, there is no evidence for this suggestion. Later, Tangier, along with a cluster of small islands became known as the *Tangier Isles* and the *Tangier Group*. For a long time, the island has been known only as *Tangier* or *Tangier Island*. This is about all we know.

For the rest of this discussion, refer to the maps on pages 63 and 70. *Ace's Hole*, found on the west side of the northernmost point of the Island, was said to be named after Captain Ace Crockett.[27] A *hole* with regard to water can be a deep place or a small bay or cove. The accuracy of the naming can be questioned because Ace Crockett's name does not appear in the death, marriage, or baptism records of the church, apart from the tombstone inscriptions, which do not go back before 1883. Earlier records were apparently either lost or, as suggested, carried off by the preachers who served there.

Banty's Wharf, located at the southernmost portion of the Main Ridge, was named after, according to local knowledge, Captain Banty Shores. *Big Gut Canal* is a narrow passage or channel running north-south from Mailboat Harbor to Cod Harbor. *Black Dye* is one of two sections of the Main Ridge. There is no record or memory of the origin or meaning of it. The typical response from the most elderly is "that it has always been called that and I don't know why."

Canaan, a name known biblically as "the Promised Land," is now an abandoned ridge, except for a duck-hunting complex, in the northernmost part of the Island. Abandoned in 1928, it is fondly remembered as "the Old Land of Canaan." *Canton*, pronounced "kenton," has always, it seems, been the choicest place to live. It is attractive to consider it as a reduced form of "Kent-Town," making it very British, but *Canton*, according to the *OED*, is a portion of land, a division, or a territorial district, which could account for its designation. Beyond this supposition nothing is known.

Cinnamon Ridge is another name whose origin is obscure. It lies among the now abandoned northern ridges. Since terrain has frequently played a role in naming of places, the spice and stone (esso-

nite) would be likely candidates where these abound, which, of course, is not Tangier.

Cod Harbor, it is safe to say, is not derived from the fish of that name, which is basically known in North Atlantic waters. The answer perhaps lies in the word *cod*, as in Cape Cod, a hooked-shaped peninsula of southeastern Massachusettes that extends east and north into the Atlantic Ocean. Just a glance at the southernmost part of Tangier with its hook-shaped peninsula reaching east into the Bay confirms a possible relationship in meaning to Cape Cod. Moreover, *cod* is also known as an inmost recess of a bay, march, or meadow, baglike in shape. It is attractive, almost irresistible, to mention *codpiece*, a pouch at the crotch of tight-fitting britches worn centuries ago.

East Point is a relatively large portion of land east of the northernmost part of the Main Ridge. It later was known as Tangier Point, and now it is called *Port Isobel*. It is the home of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which named it after Isobel, the wife of Randy Klinefelter, the donor of the property.

Grand Beach, the southernmost part of Tangier, is a descriptive name of the best portion of the beach where the annual homecoming event was held some years ago until erosion became a problem. *Granny's Landing*, a northeast point of the Island, is said to be named after an elderly lady called 'Granny,' whose house was just a short distance from the shoreline that provided access for watermen.

Histin Bridge, the southernmost of four bridges connecting the West Ridge and the Main Ridge, is a small drawbridge that allows passage for boats. "Histin" is the way the Islanders' pronounce *hoisting*, the same kind of thing they do with "pint" for *point*.

Horse Shoe was the name given to a small speck of land, now nonexistent, that at one time, as one might guess, resembled a horseshoe. It used to stand across the anchorage north of East Point or Port Isobel.

Job's Cove is a small passage between mainland Tangier and East Point, running north-south, named after, I am told, a Captain Job Parks. "Cove" as a description of this body of water seems misapplied, for it normally is a descriptive term for a sheltered body of water along the shoreline.

King Street, a street that runs north-south in the middle of the Main Ridge, is thus named very likely in the tradition and practice of the British. Some would probably suggest that it was named after one of the Kings on Tangier, but the Kings came relatively late to the Island and were never great in number. If the street is named

after one of them, it probably would have been because of some contribution that person made to the Island; if so, there is no record of it.

Meat Soup is also one of the mysteries of Tangier. It is the north section of the Main Ridge as *Black Dye* is the southern section. Not even the eldest people on the Island know the basis for those names. *New Bridge*, the northernmost of the four bridges, and obviously the newest, is also called *Mooney's Bridge* after a resident nearby. *Oyster Creek*, named after Oyster Creek Gut, which separates the Main and West Ridges from Canaan, takes its name perhaps from grounds abundant with oysters. It at one time was one of the several inhabited portions of Canaan. It is through this gut that the west-side channel was dredged.

Ruben Town, on the northeast of the island, was another of the small communities of Canaan. *Rubin's River* (spelled with an *i* instead of an *e*) runs north-south from the mail boat channel to Cod Harbor and thus separates the Main Ridge from Canton. Both of these were named, according to an elderly and well-educated resident, after Captain Ruben or Rubin Shores.

School Bridge connects the Main Ridge and the West Ridge at the location of the school just south of the New Bridge. *Sheeps Hill*, just a short distance south of Oyster Creek, was named thus because it was a grazing area for sheep. As indicated earlier, Tangier had been a farming community.

Tater Bay is a relatively small indentation or cove just south of Job's Cove on the east side of the Island at Canton, one of the best farming ridges years ago. *Tater Bay* may have taken its name because potatoes may have done especially well there. From a mere glance at the map, it would seem more appropriate if Job's Cove and Tater Bay switched designations.

Tom's Gut, which runs from the Tangier channel into the eastern side of Canaan, takes its name obviously from an earlier resident of Canaan. Just who remains a mystery. *Uppards* or *Up'ards* today is the name for all the land north of the east-west channel, which, before 1930, was called "Canaan," now referred to as "the old land of Canaan."

West Ridge is the third of the inhabited ridges and one that, before the breakwater was constructed, was most susceptible to erosion. It is where most of the farms had been. *Whale Point*, the southernmost part of Canton on the shore of Cod Harbor, was called thus because a dead whale floated ashore there. The *White Sand Hills*, a victim of winds and tides and at one time "beautiful

to view," stood at the turn of the long beach, as the end of the shank and hook of Tangier Beach.

Ruben Town, *Cinnamon Ridge*, *Oyster Creek*, *Granny's Landing*, and *Canaan* are names only a few know today. During the early years *Shankes*, *Wheeler's*, *Fishbone*, *Piney*, *Foxes*, and *Watts* were names the residents of Tangier knew well for they were a part of the Tangier Isles or Tangier Group.

Expressions

Significant Usages

Below are a number of sentences illustrating significant (those with a specialized sense) usages collected over a period of years. The item of focus is underlined and, if thought not clear, followed by an explanatory word or phrase or an extended comment within parentheses. Those items mentioned earlier receive little or no comment. Most are current, but some are fading, even disappearing, or have disappeared, except in the memory of the older people.

1. He *orte do* that (ought to).
2. He *hadn't orte do* that (shouldn't have done).
3. John's *carting* the groceries down the road. (Years ago before motorized vehicles, pushcarts were the only means of moving materials. Though they are nowhere to be seen today, the verb persists.)
4. Bill *toted* the ladder by himself (carried).
5. She didn't do it *noways* (anyway).
6. *Chuck* it overboard (also *chunk* for throw).
7. June likes *to tell a tale* (to gossip).
8. Did you *steer* it up (stir).
9. Mom's always *blaring* at him (yelling).
10. He *likete* drown (almost).
11. *Make a hurry* now (move quickly).
12. He *makes out* he don't care (also *plays like*, pretends).
13. The sheriff *warranted* him yesterday (arrested).
14. He *made a barrel* this spring (made a lot of money).
15. He lives *cross from* the school (also *abreast* of, opposite of).
16. Sam's *to* the crabhouse (as a locative, at).
17. Sue couldn't *fathom* that as easy as it was (grasp the meaning of; unit of nautical measurement of six feet, but here, in the sense of getting to the bottom of).

18. They all came over *for to tell* about the wreck (in rural and folk speech "for to" before an infinitive as an adverbial purpose clause is fairly common, but somewhat archaic).
19. He's *corking*; he needs a bigger pair of pants (caulking, as one who caulks the bottom of a boat, used on the Island about a man the seat of whose pants is being drawn up his rear end).
20. Well, Paul's not going *to throw silver dollars* at you (a reference to a tightwad).
21. Pam got it *offer* her dad (variants *offn* and *offern*; the *Dictionary of American Regional English* has copious citations, many of which contain comments about its being used only by people of little education. I have little reason to doubt this, but I ran across one of King Carter's Letterbooks with the sentence "that Cyder be drawn *offrom* the Lee's.")[28]
22. School *turns out* today (lets out).
23. Sunday School *broke* early (let out).
24. I'll *carry* you ashore (not with the sense of picking someone up, but to take the individual in a boat).
25. You *daren't* go (with the sense of both need not and should not).
26. John fell in his own *spew* (vomit).
27. I'm *sob wet* (drenched; among several entries in the *OED*, there is the general sense of *sob* as "weeping violently," and it is labeled as "dial" and "U.S." with the sense of "soak" and "saturated" and, for 1625, "sobbed in wet").
28. We're going to give *wer* part tomorrow (our).
29. I asked if he would *give tick* (*OED*: "to give credit," with the citation: "The money went to the lawyers; the counsel won't give tick.")
30. We stopped to get a *tar baby* (also *black baby*; refers to Coca-Cola, which years ago came in what looked like a black bottle; no longer current).
31. The *devil flew into* my daddy (he became violently angry).
32. I was *mudlarking* all morning and caught only twelve to fifteen peelers.
33. He *called me a bad name* (cursed or cussed).
34. You really *fixed me* when you passed to the windward (did damage to, here choked off the wind from the sails).
35. He just had *soups* and *snaps* (the first are small oysters; the second, small narrow oysters hard to open; of small value).
36. It was *not much count* (of no value).

37. The ducks were *talking* (hunter's reference to the loud quacking of ducks at night).
38. He was one of the best *tollers* on the Island (one who entices; here a decoy or live ducks set out to entice others; also a reference to small dogs in duck hunting; *OED* attributes to U.S. origin, 1874).
39. He could really play the *juice harp* (jew's harp, a small musical instrument held between the teeth when played).
40. He's hard as a *lighter's knot* (reference to a knotted line fastened to a lighter [barge] and towed by a tug; hard to untie).
41. Dad gave him the *dickens* (also the *devil* and *deuce*, as in What the *dickens* [*deuce*, devil] did he do that for?).
42. He was the best I've ever seen *progging*.
43. They *drudged* all day.
44. Stay home until the swelling *swages* (abates, an aphetic form of "assuage"; *OED* has a 1450 citation "——had—— swaged al hir ire.")
45. It's right *airish* today, isn't it? (chilly).
46. She *scobbed* her right in her mouth (obscure origin according to *OED* but has a 1657 illustrative sentence with the sense of "gag": "he mold scobe his mouthe," used on Tangier with the sense of attacking by scratching).
47. She said she felt a little *squamish* (nauseated or queasy; current elsewhere in coastal Virginia and North Carolina as *qualmis*, *qualmish*, and *quamish* but seems to be disappearing though many know the meaning of it. *OED*: 1670 "Qualmish——yet with a sickly appetite——")
48. Boy, she's *falling off* (losing weight).
49. He set sail and was *scudding* along ahead of the wind (earlier a nautical term for sailing, but generally a word for moving along).
50. He really got *mommucked* up when he hit the bench on his bike (scratched and chewed up, mangled, or torn to pieces).
51. Captain John forgot his *spyglass* and *searchlight* (binoculars and flashlight).
52. Have you seen Bill's *losipe* (a tricycle, from "velocipede").
53. They were playing on the *cock-hoss*.
54. They sold for *mor'n* three hundred dollars (more than).
55. Leon's going to give it to you, *over the left* (negates the sense).

56. It looked *caty-bias* (out of line, *DARE* lists as also in Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania).
57. Mom's out *pulling* flowers (picking).
58. Grandma said she'll *back* the Christmas cards (to address the envelopes).
59. Emma almost had a *conniption fit* (a fit of anger).
60. Mr. Crockett said that he *disremembered* the storm (did not remember).
61. It ain't *fitten* to go out today (bad weather).
62. She told Katie that she went *spar-grassing* near the ditch bank (hunting for asparagus).
63. He was Johnnie's *waiter* in the wedding (from Lowman's record for best man or anyone in a wedding; seldom, if ever, heard today).
64. Go call the *granny woman* (from Lowman's record for midwife, not used today).
65. Every Sunday, we had roast beef and *aish-potatoes* (Irish potatoes).
66. He's got *more mouth than a sheep* (very talkative in a disparaging way).
67. *On back of that*, his mom fell down the steps (in addition to).
68. We had *salt-spot* for breakfast (a kind of salt-cured fish).
69. I don't know why she *keeps throwing* that *up to me* (constantly reminding and nagging).
70. John's mom and dad *waits on* him *hand and foot* (always do things for him).
71. Elmer *corks* his batteau every fall (caulks).
72. Mary's in the other room *ramsacking* (a mispronunciation of *ransack* with the sense of a search for things in chests of drawers, closets, etc., to see just what can be found, perhaps out of boredom or curiosity).
73. *Rench* the dishes before school (rinse).
74. Thomas is so *out of heart*, I feel sorry for him (discouraged).
75. That *rising* looks worse (boil).
76. Knowing that they caught fish yesterday puts you *in heart* about the week to come (enthusiastic).
77. Carlton doesn't want to *foller the water* (does not want to be a waterman).
78. *Mind your step* (be careful).
79. He ain't *looking for knotty logs* (not very ambitious or a hard worker).

80. Who's left his skiff in my place? (Move it right away).
81. *Get aholt* of my stern line (grab).
82. Did he tie up *along* his boat (beside).
83. His shirt *drawed-up* (shrank).
84. Wait, he's *afore* you (before you).
85. His mom *learned* him to read (an older form for "teach"; now nonstandard, but frequent on Tangier).
86. Sonny didn't make *a red cent* (a penny).
87. I've got to *wash* first (take a shower).
88. The *camp meeting* lasted all day (religious meeting popular for years on Tangier and elsewhere; an event no longer taking place on the Bay).
89. Frank's out *galing* tonight (courting or dating).
90. Young man, you're *going to catch it* (in for a whipping).
91. Give him a *dost* of castor oil (a dose).
92. Sarah's going to leave *without* they come (unless).
93. Hilda gave *all what* she could (everything).
94. Down he went *ass-over-tin-cup* (head over heels).
95. Doncha stop that? (Why don't you stop that).
96. Ethel's got to go *bimeby* (in a little while; from "by and by," of British origin).
97. Mr. Jones is a *drummer* for Knapp shoes (salesman).
98. Dad's going to 'Nancock for a *spell* (a period of time).
99. Before she bought the dress, she wanted *to feel of it* (examine it).
100. It's your turn to do a *good turn* (deed).
101. Seth is as *poor as Job's turkey* (relating to the biblical Job's poverty).
102. Amanda wouldn't do such a thing *to save her life* (an exaggeration to suggest how adamant a person would be).
103. He said he had to *do his job* (have a bowel movement).
104. She's always *bragging* on you (paying someone compliments).
105. Why don't you keep *quite* (quiet)?
106. Well, it's the *dog-days'* time of year for us (hot, humid time in late summer when fishing and crabbing are bad).
107. Bill's gone to *fish-up* his pots (to pull up his pots, or floats, empty the crabs, and bait the pots).
108. She *throwed it off* like nothing happened. (ignored it).
109. We've been playing *base* (on Tangier *base* referred to baseball, not to prisoner's base, a ball and tag game. In the PBS film *Undaunted Courage*, about the Lewis and Clark expe-

dition, the narrator mentioned an Indian stick and ball game they called "base").

110. They're *on the main* (reference to the mainland).
111. We can't *get no weather* (no good working weather).
112. He's gitting above his *raisin'* (putting on social airs).
113. He's gone *star-crazy* (stir-crazy).
114. Are you going to *raise a fire*? (to make a fire in a wood stove).
115. Dad made me go *mustering* (a practice for many people during the Depression of gathering drift or discarded wood for fuel along the shore).
116. I got *venches* on that (during mustering, a claim on an item or portion of the shoreline).
117. He didn't have *neither a cent*.
118. I'm glad we don't have lawyers because they'd be *lawing* all the time.
119. Dad's eyes *swole shut*.
120. *Scour* them dishes (wash).
121. He *stoppered* the oil can (plugged it).
122. He's *smartern* (smarter than) *Ruediger* or *Hey Ruediger*! (Ruediger was a county surveyor who in 1904 outsmarted a crowd of Islanders who tried to thwart his efforts to make a survey of oyster grounds and thus became to the Islanders an icon of intelligence, or a lack of such as expressed in the exclamation, and a part of their language).[29]
123. He was cut right down to the *wick* (quick, the raw exposed flesh).
124. Barry jumped *clean* (clear) across the ditch.
125. His boy don't *skin* none (he quickly, easily, and severely burns from sunburn).
126. Sue went to the doctor for a check up—and she *only* died! (not with the sense of alone or sole, but with that of surprise).
127. Well, John's *a norder* this morning! (This said of a person means that he is out of joint or in a foul mood).
128. *Hawkins's here*! (an expression about the arrival of severe and harsh weather).
129. He came *nigh as peace (piece)* falling off the roof (a comparative [almost] certainly, but the sense of the phrasal use is unknown).
130. Soon, somebody's going to *break him of it* (to change rather sharply his pattern of bad behavior or habits).

131. They keep *going on to* him all the time (bothering, teasing, and criticizing).

Exclamations

Euphemistic exclamations of anger, surprise, and disgust are numerous everywhere and range from mild words and phrases to very coarse ones. Those given below are very characteristic of Tangier speech.

1. Well, *I swanny*, he went right ahead and done that (connotes surprise, as in "I swear").
2. *I swear and kiss the Bible* that he said it (connotes the sense of "believe me" prompted by a feeling that the person being spoken to here has doubt. Though "I swear" and "I swanny" are interchangeable in many situations, "I swanny" would not work here).
3. *I'll swagger*, if he didn't quit a day later (connotes surprise and disgust).
4. *Jiminy Criminy*, don't keep doing that (a euphemism, of course, for Jesus Christ, connoting here anger or disgust, *OED* lists "crimine" and "criminy" having a sense of "crime" and as a "vulgar exclamation of astonishment" and "archaic"; A 1681 citation: "O crimine! Who's yonder?" It is doubtful that the exclamation would ever have a vulgar sense in the mouths of the Islanders. I am not sure that the euphemistic sense is realized).
5. *That's all over*, if you keep telling that (the expression here connotes disgust in that the speakers would be "put out"; it does not mean what the words say—that is, "everything will come to an end"; it's an ejaculation with the sense "stop telling that").
6. *I'm a die*, he does (neither surprise, disgust, or anger, it, with variations of "I hope to die," I'm a dog," and "I'm a dag," is not an expression here where the speaker feels disbelief; rather he or she wants the person being spoken to be reassured that the subject does what is spoken of).
7. *Durn if he don't* brag on you (this is obviously an abbreviated form of *I be damned* which tends to negate the sense of the utterance: "he really brags on you a lot").
8. *Lord a mercy*, John, leave him alone (like *My Savior*, and *God a mighty*, euphemistic exclamations, which express, depending on context, either positive or negative feelings. Here, however, it's disgust).
9. *That's it!* (If a person is asked a question, such as "What's

in the bag?"—and does not care to reveal what is in the bag, he or she is likely and abruptly to reply with "That's it!" with the sense that it is none of the questioner's business).
10. *Hey! Mr. Nutters!* (an exclamation or address directed at a person, usually a child, for being naughty; derived from an early Island minister who was an unusually good man).
11. *Wait!* (a prolonged and rather intense utterance that the Islanders may make when they hear of a report such as one about a person who has not had a bath in a week, expressing disgust about being in the presence of that person).
12. "What of it!" (a likely response of a speaker directed at one who has been agitated by what the speaker has said or done, with the sense of "What are you going to do about it?).

11

Grammatical Features and Correctness

No matter the social group or the region, the matters of equality and correctness of language eventually become issues of one sort or the other. The matter of equality of language, or dialect, the more important here of the two issues, is easier to deal with. People who study and describe language and its varieties—that is, dialects—accept as a fact that no language or dialect is intrinsically superior to others. If one considers all the languages of the world and the many dialectal variations of them, one will find that the speakers, even the so-called "primitives," have survived their early origins, are able to speak with each other with ease and force, are able to satisfy their needs as they see them, and are able to conduct the daily affairs of their lives. That this is true seems to deserve the conclusion that one variety, linguistically speaking, is just as good as another.

However, our school experience and the general reading and speaking public seem to make it clear that it is not so. Not only is it not true, it is, they think, even destructive to think otherwise. For someone to say that Quechua, Shoshone, Albanian, American English, and southern American English are respectively as inherently good and logical as Spanish, English, Russian, British English, and northern American English is, to some, foolish beyond measure. Some languages and dialects are certainly more prestigious than others, but the prestige does not come from language structure; it comes from status and power. Nevertheless, even among the most learned and intelligent of us, there are those who steadfastly believe that American English is inferior to British English, and southern American English, to northern American English. Yet, it is impossible to show that either is superior or inferior to the other. As of now, the excellence of them cannot be rated and demonstrated in objective, scientific terms. Some languages are, of course, better than others in doing certain things, such as repairing the Hubble telescope and conducting safaris in Kenya. At the mo-

ment, English would be more useful for the first, and Kenya Swahili, for the second. However, if experiences and histories were reversed, then is it not likely that conditions and capabilities would be also? In short, we must content ourselves with the fact of the equality of languages.

The other matter is correctness, the concern here, of given varieties of a language. The way people talk is so much a part of their lives that they rarely pause to reflect about it. A problem arises because someone somewhere in every generation makes it his or her business to reflect about it, making a fuss over what people think they do naturally, easily, and even flawlessly. People come to find out that the way they talk is wrong and harmful and that someone has placed over them or their speaking lives a psychological force or authority so that they will never be quite the same again. People are not only told that they "don't talk right" but that they "sound different" as well. As people get along with their lives, in and out of school, they begin to think of these prohibitions and injunctions to talk better as "school stuff," much like recess and homework, and not a big deal, though guilt and shame are, they sense, lurking somewhere in the recesses of their minds. Then, as people get older and begin to think about what they are going to do for a living, they begin to realize that this "school stuff" is no illusion, even though some of the precepts and practices used to show us how to "talk right" were unrealistic and questionable. Correctness of speech is an important matter, and the way they sound is also. This should not be taken to mean that people all should strive and strain to acquire "flawless English," and to sound like everyone else, first, because no one can achieve "flawless English" and, second, because it is pure nonsense to think that people can sound the same or that they should.

As a rule, living an isolated life on an island, such as that of Tangier, which is somewhat circumscribed and detached in outlook and experience, does not call for a lot of attention to matters of language. In this special kind of insularity, language is a pretty commonplace matter—that is, until public comment or ridicule is directed at the speech of the Islanders and an Islander hears another Islander trying to "talk proper" when strangers ask questions. Otherwise, the propriety of language and the way they talk are of little concern. They are aware that there are those who think that Tangier speech is special, for they are constantly bombarded in newspapers and magazines and on radio and television by stories about their speech as "Elizabethan" or "old-fashioned." They generally take these observations in stride and appear not to be both-

ered. I am not sure that any of them know what is meant by "Elizabethan speech," nor am I certain that the journalists can offer in way of explanation much beyond the utterance of the label.

The Islanders, however, if pushed, would not disagree that their speech is different. They might even say that it is "bad," not in the sense of incorrect usage, but in that they do not sound like the world around them. No matter the labels of "folk speech," "relic speech," "nonstandard speech," or "incorrect speech," or whatever one desires to call it, Tangier speech is not correct speech willfully and knowingly—or for that matter, unconsciously—perverted by its speakers. Much of the nonstandard usage or usage peculiarities merely represent what informed people know, or should—that is, appropriate usages preserved in relic or folk speech after they had been given up or lost in other "better" varieties of language. For example, "drudged" is not a corruption of *dredged*, but an earlier appropriate form preserved in Tangier speech and lost in the standard varieties, as is their "extri" for *extra*.

Everyone would agree, I hope, that American English, like most languages of the world, differs socially and regionally. One also knows that many people complain about differences as perversions and distortions of whatever variety they happen to think is standard or best. There are some who get so worked up that they even think of social decay and fear these aberrations as a general threat to culture. To them, there is one variety of English, and all other varieties are deviations, wrong, or bad. The truth is that all varieties of English are grammatical—that is, in the sense that they are rule based and valid and capable of expressing the needs, emotions, desires, and opinions with clarity and force. The problem with "other varieties" is that they are different. Difference becomes a problem because some tend to oversimplify historical change in terms of "correct" and "incorrect" and "right" and "wrong," believing that how they speak is the former of the opposites, and how others speak, the latter. It should be sobering for all to know that probably no one, not even the great prescriptive grammarians, has spoken or written English without "accidents" of some sort.

What, then, determines the standards for society? Only one response is relevant: custom. However, to accept that all dialects have histories and are rule based is one thing. To deny the social significance of nonstandard usage and dialectal differences is quite another. Socially, let me hasten to add, how one speaks and writes is of utmost importance and should never be underestimated. Even here, however, one thought must prevail, and that is that one must

not think of the absolutes of only *right* and *wrong*, because no such absolute distinctions can be drawn from language usage.

Language matters. For some scholars of language communities like Tangier Island to describe their speech as preserving features from earlier times, even as early as that of Shakespeare and Chaucer, and to argue that these features and other differences are mere historical accidents and development and leave it at that can be doing a community a disservice. There is, of course, nothing wrong with showing a community that many of its characteristic speech features are well within good historical traditions and that rather than being ashamed of their status today they should be proud of their presence in their speech. This is good up to a point—but only up to a point. Everyone knows that professional students of language discern qualities in nonstandard varieties of English that tend to elude most people. One can most certainly come to appreciate accounts of how different varieties develop and change and also how systematic they are. What needs to be stressed, however, is that all varieties of language are not equal in reaching out and that the public does not place the same value judgments upon speech that linguists do. They need to know that the public as a whole is much harsher, though at times, wrongheaded. Those who advocate the tolerance of linguistic differences and preach "pride" to speakers of relic dialects should make clear to these people, especially so since so many of them are seeking college degrees and other kinds of lives and livelihoods outside their communities, that academic, social, and financial rewards may not be within their grasp if they cannot use English as practiced by most decision makers of public affairs and business. They need to be told that the men and women who reach the top in our banks, industries, armies and navies, professions, pulpits, schools, and colleges are people who, as a general rule, have a control of standard English. This is not a plea for the eradication of dialects and accents, but one for the importance of the acquisition of a type of English that will not stereotype them as poorly educated or uneducated.

How Tangier Islanders regard their way of talking is hard to say. As far as I know, there is no major concern among them nor thoughtful discussions about the nature of their speech. I am not convinced, furthermore, that the rudiments of English usage and writing have any more emphasis in the Tangier school than in the mainland schools. Whether they are aware of the social ramifications of speech is not clear. This should not be taken to mean that they are completely oblivious to the way they talk, for in talking to strangers, as already mentioned, if not closely observed by other Is-

landers, they have a tendency to try to correct their speech toward a standard of sorts. Yet, they hardly have social convulsions about whether their speech is inferior or not. When the Islanders speak of their talk, I am confident that they have in mind the way they sound and their unusual phraseology, not "grammar-usage." Those who want education beyond high school or a life off-island have a big decision to make—that is, whether they are going to be concerned about their speech. That decision, as is well known, will determine, for the most part, the kinds of lives and success they may have.

Following is a brief survey of those features of Tangier speech that are the most conspicuous and probably the most interesting to us. Earlier and elsewhere, I have written that Tangier Islanders are generally nonstandard speakers. This is not to say that one will not encounter those who have control of standard English. Nonstandard forms, however, are not only natural and numerous but also the rule in both guarded and unguarded conversations. Tangier speech, like all other varieties of English, obeys the rules of word order and sentence structure of standard English. One must keep in mind that many of the following features are shared by speakers of English everywhere and were during earlier times quite appropriate in the mouths of the "better sort."

I shall begin with verbs, which reflect several striking usages, some of which are not entirely peculiar to Tangier speech. Some personal forms of the verb are particularly interesting and pervasive. For "I have been," one more often than not hears *I'm been* and for "I have got," *I'm got*. The interrogative "am I going" occurs as *is I going* or more accurately, *is "uh" goin*. Such usage should not, however, lead one to think *I is going* is normal. In fact, I have never heard such usage. Noteworthy for "are they," "are you," and "are we" are respectively *id-de*, *e-ye*, and *e-we*, with all the *e* sounds like that in *bid*. "Ain't," usually thought of as a contraction of "am not," and "isn't" in the structure "isn't it" is pronounced as *idnit*. For all persons except the first, *dudn't* is the usual form of the negatives "doesn't" and "don't." *Was* for the past tense is the common form for "were," and for the negatives "were not" and "weren't," *wudn't* is usual. Also "weren't," pronounced *werdn't*, or *wudn't*, is used with "I," "he," "she," and "it," for example, as in *she said he werdn't going*. They seem to distinguish between positive and negative: "Jim was there, he weren't today" and "You was, you weren't." It is interesting to find *he usen't do that* for "he didn't used to do that."

Nonstandard forms showing past times are common: *aest*

(asked), *blowed*, *boilt*, *borned*, *broke(d)*, *brung(ed)*, *busted*, *catched* or *ketched*, *come*, *div(d)*, *done*, *drug(ed)*, *drudged* (dredged), *drawed*, *drunk(ed)*, *driv(d)*, *drived* or *droved*, *drownded*, *eat*, *freezed* or *frozed*, *give(d)*, *growed*, *heerd* (pronounced *yerd*), *holp* (rare), *knowed*, *riz(ed)* or *rised*, *wrung(ed)*, *ruinded*, *runned*, *seed* or *seen*, *shet*, *shrunked*, *sit* or *sot*, *soakened*, *solt*, *spoilt*, *stunded*, *swolt*, *taken* or *takened*, *teached*, *throwed*, *teared*, *weared*, and *wrote* (written). The *-ed* form, furthermore, is frequently lost in phrases, such as *barb* or *bob* (wire), *smoke* (meat), *salt* (fish), *boil* (eggs), and *sob* (wet).

The *-ing* form of the verb, as one would expect, is rarely heard; instead, *fishin* and *singin* are the normal forms. Like many isolated or rural communities, the Islanders use the prefix *a-* with verbs ending in *-ing*, as in *a-laughin* and *a-singin*, but clearly not with the frequency of Appalachian communities. *Could have gone out* (fishing) occurs as *could of gone out*. At times, it is hard to determine whether *have* or *of* occurs at all. For example, in *might have fished yesterday*, one often thinks that one hears only *might fished yesterday*, either with a very lightly articulated feature or none at all. To express that a waterman has six shedding floats, one is likely to hear *he's got six floats shedding*.

Other irregular forms are the double or phrased verbs *usete could* and *might could*, pretty much traditional uneducated Southern expressions, but now quite frequently heard from the educated. Other phrasal combinations are *usete didn't*, *I ruthern not*, *caught afire*, *came over for to tell*, *hadn't orte go*, and the known but rarely used *he belongs to be careful*. The verb combinations such as *make a hurry*, *make out* (pretend), and *give out* (exhausted) are very common, as are *took a cold* and *taken sick*. The transitive use of *learn* and *born*, as in *she learned him how to do it* and *Dr. Gladstone borned you*, and the intransitive use of *beat*, as in the *Yankees beat*, are usual. *Likete* (almost) in *he likete drown* is pervasive. *Done*, well-established all over the country among the uneducated, is frequent in Tangier speech in such expressions as *done washed*, *done gone*, even *done did*, and *I'm done makin' crab pots*. The contraction for "am not," "are not," "is not," "has not," and "have not," as in most nonstandard speech, is *ain't*.

The lack of agreement between subject and verb and other uninflected plurals is the rule. The *-s* form can occur with plurals: *me and him runs up the sound of mornings*, *Mary and Bill's left for Crisfield*, and *the doors and windows is shut*. With their preference for the singular, it is not surprising that the plural forms *hives*, *measles*, and *mumps* take the singular, which, of course, would be stan-

dard. Other plurals, like "parents" and "prayer bands," take the singular: *her parents is gone* and the *prayer bands meets Saturdays*. Also, *crabs is high* and *all the other boats is in*. Pronouns such as "all," "most," and "some" and the phrasal "a lot of," used before nouns or alone commonly occur with singular verbs: *some boats runs over your pots, most is going over, all of them thinks it's bad,* and *a lot of fish traps is set near the point*. Most collective nouns show variance between singular and plural, but with those like "people" and "family," where the notion of plural is already strong, Tangier Islanders tend toward the use of the singular. After the plural pronouns "we" and "they," *was* is usual, but I have never encountered *we is* and *they is*. For "we are going" and "they are going," common forms are *wer going* and *ther going*, which obviously can be construed as contractions of "we are" and "they are." For "wasn't" in "it wasn't me," the most frequent expression, mentioned earlier, is *it weren't me* or *it werdn't me* with "weren't" pronounced as two syllables. Sentences with *-ing* words or phrases as subjects are usually followed by plural verbs, as in *talking to him don't matter*. The unchanged or uninflected plural after nouns of measurement is general: *she carries about fifty head, about ten foot, fifty pound of jimmies, fifteen fathom of line, fifty cent,* and *to the north about four mile*. Many such locutions—that is, terms of measurement—have been quite acceptable, however, for generations.

The use of pronouns is noteworthy. Like many other varieties of English, in England as well as the United States, the objective forms "me," "him," "her," "us," and "them" occur as coordinated subjects of sentences, such as in *me and him went out early* and *him and her's done eat*. It is curious that with these pronouns in the objective case, in such sentences as "the teacher told John and me" and "he gave it to my brother and him," Tangier speakers, because they have little problem with, or sense of, hypercorrection, tend to be "more correct" more often than the socially sensitive educated in making choices here. "I" is rare except when used as the single subject of a sentence. The possessive forms *hisn, hern, ourn, yourn* and *theirn* are frequently used. *Hisself* and *theirself* are common as well. The use of *me* is usual in sentences such as *I fixed me some salt fish*. The universal pronouns expressing "only one" and "no other person" occurs as *all the ones* and *not a soul else*. *Those* and *this* are replaced commonly by "them," and "this here" in phrases such as *them two right there* and *this here dock*. Not unusual are occurrences of the *what* in the personal sense as in *he's the one what told me* and the absence of relatives (who,that)

as in *there's a man Smith Island can do that*. The *it* in place of *there* is quite normal on Tangier in such constructions as *it's a difference* and *it's some crabs there*. To express exclusion in structures like "John or Charles" in the sense of "one or the other," the Islanders usually say *John or Charles one*.

Some of the uses of prepositions are interesting. One such is *off of,* with variants *off'n* and *offa* with reduced forms as in *I got the bait off'n Poug*. Sometimes one may think one hears *offrom*, a form, as indicated earlier, found in King Carter's correspondence in early eighteenth century. Also interesting and frequently heard are *of a morning* and *of nights*. The preposition *to* in the sense of location is used in such expressions as *Katie's to the store*. *Without* and *withouten* are heard with the sense of *unless* as in *he ain't goin do that without (withouten) she takes the baby along*. Frequently heard around the docks is *he's along Josh's boat*, that is, "alongside it." The only peculiar use of *than* is in structures like *he's bettern (than) John* or *it's hottern hades*.

The use of adjectives and adverbs is not exceptional in that their nonstandard usage is found in many other communities like Tangier and, yes, even in the speech of many of those who consider themselves as standard speakers of English. The end of the last paragraph shows for the comparative use of *bettern* and *hottern*. The forms *-er* and *-est* are the most common forms in showing degrees of what is named in a word, but they are used even with the irregulars as in *badder*, *worser*, and *worsest*. The phrasal *more* and *most* occur, often though as an addition to those that are regularly used, such as *more tighter*, *more better*, *more older*, *most hardest*, *most lovinger* and *most awfulest*. The *-ed* ending of adjectives, cited earlier, in *smok(ed) meat*, *barb(ed) wire*, *boil(t) eggs* is dropped, a feature hardly confined to the lower levels, as even the most educated have a strong tendency to say *mash potatoes, old-fashion*, and *whip cream*.

The modifier *right* as an adverb of degree, typically considered Southern, is frequent: *right proud*, *right much*, and *right fast*. It is rare that they distinguish adverbs in *-ly* and their appropriate adjectives, *quickly* and *quick,* for example. This feature, of course, is not new and not only in the speech of the uneducated and rustic. This *-ly*-less feature persists in *his boat runs slow* and *the cake is sure good*.

Double or multiple negatives are widespread: *he can't run none*, *it didn't get no better today*, *he ain't got nary one*, *didn't nobody say he weren't finished*, *he's never been nowhere but tonging on the James (River) nohow*, and *Seth never has done nothing but cull*

crabs noways. A not-neither combination, as in *he didn't do it neither,* is often heard. An interesting adverb-verb combination occasionally heard is *I'm all done fishing my traps and Jim's half done his*. Another is the use of *but*: *he won't do it but once* and *he's just got but 250 pots*. And finally, the addition of *-s* to adverbs is normal: *nowheres*, *somewheres*, *backwards*, *forwards*, *noways*, and *wherebouts*.

In sum, two reminders must be stated. First, Tangier talk is not a bastardized or corrupt variety of English. It is now and has been, just like any other variety of English here and abroad, a part of the continuity and change in the long history of the English language. Second, from the 1936 Lowman field records, the speech of which reaches at least to the Civil War period, until relatively recent years, it would be safe to say that the usage described here represents, excluding perhaps a precious few, the norm. In recent years, more of the younger group go to college and graduate. One or two may return to teach. The others may stay on the Shore, but frequently visit, as is customary of former natives, often reflecting some changes in their speech, in that they may sound "a little more proper." As far as I can tell, the cumulative effect of such is not much, but one does hear more standard English today. Strangers may possibly have some effect because when they encounter the Islanders, the latter try to talk "proper." Because the strangers do not stay, their influence passes quickly. Whether this is a loss is hard to say. What one needs to appreciate is that many peculiarities of speech thought rustic represent at one time standard usage retained in rustic speech after they have been lost in other varieties—a perfectly normal and respectable process in the history of any language.

12

Tangier Talk, Relationships, and Future

THE COMMUNITIES ON ALL OF THE ISLANDS OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY and the outer banks of North Carolina are populated mainly by people traditionally close to the sea who for generations have made their living by following the water—clamming, oystering, fishing, crabbing, and piloting. They have generally stayed where they were born. To be sure, some people have left and some still leave, but to anyone visiting these places, their presence is still highly visible and "audible." Newcomers are rare in some of the localities, but not in others. At times, these small villages seem to be overrun by outsiders (tourists) and dominated by summer and retirement homes. Not all, thank goodness, are threatened by newness and rapid growth, but some are beginning to be squeezed. Despite the varying degrees of isolation and invasion, they, like communities everywhere, have inevitably been touched by education, television, radio, telephone, mobility, and, yes, even the Internet. It does not take long for someone who has been familiar with these places to see how much their lives have changed.

There are even manifestations that their speech ways have been tangibly affected, for the residents can be found to change their natural speech toward what they construe as the standard or likeness of their region—that is, what they consider as "talking proper." Some students of language are saying that the way of talking of these communities, if not at the point of death, is at least endangered. Their speech, however, even in the most invaded villages, especially among the very young, remains strong and distinctive enough to draw interest, smiles, and comment—and, if you believe some of the tourists, even bewilderment, sometimes expressed in disagreeable tones and reactions of ridicule and disrespect. To be frank, though, none of the people are as secluded as they once were, and most, year by year, are becoming less immune to outside or mainland linguistic and social influences.

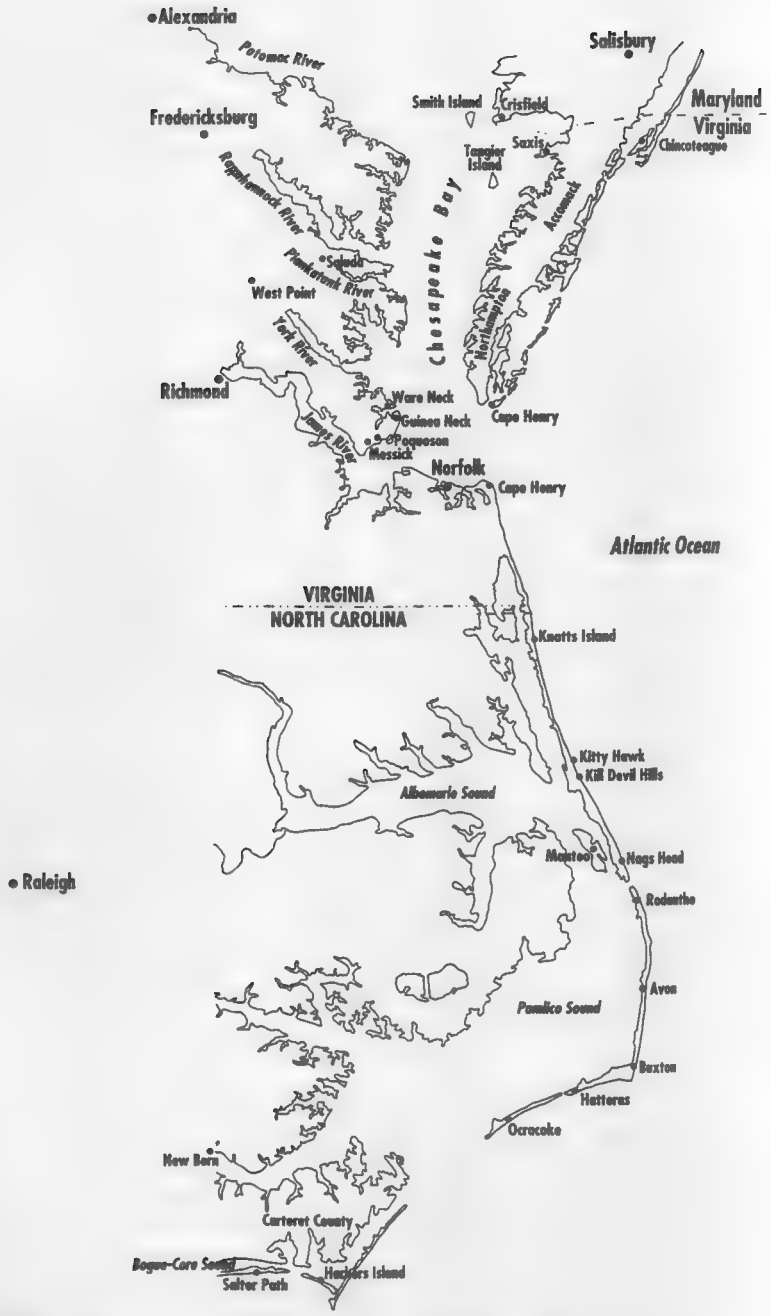
Nevertheless, there is much that has remained the same; the

most striking thing that has done so is the way the people talk. Popular accounts are that the dialects of those communities that stretch from the islands in the Bay to the southernmost of the Outer Banks, the Bogue-Core Sound area of Carteret County, all sound alike. This perception of uniformity has some basis in fact. Yet, it is deceptive, for there are differences. In fact, it would be singular if they did not, since the people are scattered miles apart along the coast and have had since early times relatively little to do with each other, except, of course, the common endeavor of following the water. As I have noted, some have called these varieties of speech "old-fashioned" and "Elizabethan."

Those who hear the Tangier Island, Virginia, variety first say that it sounds like that of Ocracoke on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and those who hear the latter say the same thing about the former. Another variety of it, that of Smith Island, Maryland, just a few miles north of Tangier, has been described as "a bastardized British accent which isn't always easy to understand." Another observer has spoken of still another variety of it as a "rolling Elizabethan drawl, the speakers of which have their tongues frozen into a centuries old patois." Wesley Frank Craven, the noted seventeenth-century American historian, with particular reference to the Outer Banks, wrote: "The Elizabethan tongue that once rang out across the James and York may still be heard in certain out-of-the way spots of the South."[1]

The instinct of the public, no matter the level of their education and sophistication, then, has been solid in continuing to recognize the dialects as Elizabethan. Statements like these are troublesome, to be sure, and often irritate students of dialects who prefer to speak of "relic areas," areas that they define as having preserved, because of their remoteness, archaic features that have disappeared elsewhere. An earlier editor of *American Speech*, for example, wrote: "Perhaps the most old-fashioned varieties of Delmarva speech are current on the islands in the Chesapeake Bay and off the Atlantic Coast."[2]

If the amateur observer of speech were pressed to explain what he or she meant by "Elizabethan," he or she would probably say unwittingly essentially what I have ascribed to some of the linguists. All the observations are worrisome, for they appear to contain some assumptions about settlement history, dialect origins and relationships, and linguistic change that are difficult to be certain about. The speech ways of these communities have drawn attention from amateur and professional alike. The British Broadcasting Company (BBC), a few years ago completed a segment for television that tied



"Map of Coastal Areas." Illustration: Deborah Miller

these remote communities and others to Colonial and seventeenth-century British English. Others are trying to reconstruct Colonial English by studying American relic areas, such as those focused on in this study. Still others who are primarily interested in "sound change in progress" have seen and still see relic areas as fertile grounds for their investigations, because they can more likely encounter here more abundantly what is crucial to their principles of speech investigation, a focus on continuity and change in language and the need for the unreflecting and unguarded language of everyday life—that is, the vernacular, or what they view as the most systematic form of speech. There are also others who have the traditional concerns of the analysis of the speech of these areas for tracing it to the oldest regional patterns and relating them to settlement history. Whatever their interests, all speak of these areas as distinctive, even unique.

The oldest and surest thing that can be said about these coastal dialects, taken together or separately, is that they, like other varieties of American English, are derived ultimately from a wide spectrum of seventeenth-century British regional dialects and, therefore, are of mixed origins. Since communication during the settlement period, and for years after, was poor and, at best, difficult, one must accept the possibility of a further development of differences, yet continuity, which is, perhaps without saying, as evident and persistent as change. The varieties of English brought to these shores were modified as the years went by, and those communities in relative isolation tended to preserve older and earlier forms and developed somewhat independently. The most striking thing they all seem to share is that they speak varieties of English that differ rather sharply from those of mainland communities of the states to which they geographically and administratively belong. As isolated communities, they are also relic dialect areas, those areas that hold on to forms of speech that have disappeared from other varieties. As relic areas, it should be made clear that they are not examples of the "purity" of language, nor are they a single homogeneous dialect area—neither the islands of the Bay, the villages of the Outer Banks, nor the coastal fringes of these areas. Regional and local variants within the geographical area prescribed exist. Yet, taken together or separately, they are distinctive enclaves or "speech islands," as stated before, in sharp contrast with the mainland areas of their respective states, whose varieties, one needs to be reminded, also go back to British origins.

Vocabulary, expression, grammar usage, the sounds of unstressed syllables, the change, loss, and addition of sounds, and so

forth, are conspicuous but not the most distinctive and important aspects found here. All the areas do have local variants and common features, both of which may be rare elsewhere. It is worth noting that places like Appalachia and the northern coastal communities (Kittery Point, Maine, for example) share some of these features. However, it is the quality and pronunciation of vowels that distinguish southern regions. In the light of this, plus the other features and areas just mentioned, one may quite reasonably question the assumption that the dialects of the Bay and the Outer Banks, based upon early history and migration, derived solely and directly from seventeenth-century Tidewater Virginia as if it were uniform in structure and composition.

The tradition is that the early settlers moved from Jamestown to the north along the York and Rappahannock to the Northern Neck and directly across the Bay to the Eastern Shore. From the Shore, it is assumed, they moved to the Bay islands with most of the migration and settlement taking place before the end of the seventeenth century. Tangier Island, for example, is said to have been settled "in 1686 and by Cornishmen." The view about the Outer Banks settlement is that it was relatively complete around 1715–1725 and that most of the settlers came south from Tidewater Virginia or the nearby mainland in the Albermarle Sound area. From this one is supposed to assume that permanent settlement was very early and that cultural habits, including speech, began to take a noticeable and somewhat distinctive form at that point or shortly thereafter.

Allow me to suggest, primarily on the basis of speech similarities, a modification of this received view. Let me begin with the belief that the formative stages of these dialects—that is, the period at which they took on the characteristics they have today—would have been between 1800 and 1850, give or take a decade or two. Those who had settled earlier in the mountains, the islands, and the coastal banks were later joined by small groups over the years, whose geographical point of dissemination and migration may have been in the northern Bay area, perhaps in the southern Maryland region to which they had migrated earlier and where they had been for a while and long enough to have become somewhat of a recognizable cultural, social, and linguistic group. From this area, they could have migrated toward the mountains and down the Bay and on to the Outer Banks.

Because pronunciation is the most remarkable aspect that distinguishes these dialects, the focus will be on this alone. One of the features that marks the outermost communities of the Atlantic seaboard is the normal retention and pronunciation of a clear *-r* after

vowels and final *-r* in words such as *park*, *Norfolk*, *her*, *Martha*, *care*, *start*, and so on, in contrast to the divided patterns or usage of the mainland communities. The practice of pronouncing the *r* in such words was regular in English speech and brought to this country with the first settlers and remained throughout the Colonial period with, it is thought, the *r*-less type coming much later. From earlier spellings, however, there is some evidence of *r* dropping, though essentially confined to the socially elite as a prestige form. As years went by, the *r*-less type spread and became predominant in four major areas of the country, all along the Atlantic coast: eastern New England, Metropolitan New York, the Virginia Piedmont (to include Tidewater), and the coastal plains of the Carolinas and Georgia. It is clear that the strong pronunciation of the *r*, the older form, on the outermost communities of these areas, especially the islands of the Bay and the villages of the Outer Banks, is due to their long geographical remoteness and years of isolation. It is worth noting that the *r*-less pronunciation is receding in most of the areas where it was once strong, ironically coming in line with that of the "lesser sort."

Special mention should be made also of *aunt*, whether its pronunciation occurs with the "broad a" of *flaunt* or the "flat a" of *ant*. Some, dialectologists and lay persons alike, have made much capital about the former as a fashionable or "sought after" pronunciation in Eastern Virginia. Even serious studies do not list the form as a feature of the less educated people, though they admit that it has some currency among them. My experience is otherwise. The "broad *a*" version of *aunt* is the rule among Eastern Virginia mainlanders, among the uneducated as well as the educated, blacks as well as whites, and those without means and position as well as those with them. Divided usage exists in Eastern North Carolina. This should not be taken to mean that the "broad *a*" is widespread in all the so-called *ask* words, that is, *half*, *rather*, *chance*, and *can't*, and so on. What has been said here applies only to the word *aunt*. On the islands of the Bay and the Outer Banks, speakers have traditionally pronounced *aunt* as *ant*, the predominant version, as everyone knows, in the United States and, I might add, in the northern regions of England.

The "*r*-less" and the "broad *a*" pronunciations, scholars seem to think, did not really take hold in England until around the early eighteenth century, and even then some among those who cared about speech propriety tended to think of their use as over-refined and forced. Other careful speakers, both in America and England, for a long time, looked upon the forms as rustic and avoided them.

During most of the century, both had questionable distinctions, though they had some currency among the "better sort."[3] This remains so even today and, as just mentioned, appears to be losing ground everywhere. The "*r*-ful" and "flat *a*" are and have been the usual forms in America. In Virginia, close ties with England during the early eighteenth century led to a borrowing of speech fashions as well as other kinds of behavior, but acts that obviously had few imitators among the outermost communities of coastal America. This accounts for the broad picture of the distribution of these two features that separate the coastal mainland from the outermost communities, but the latter do have some differences. For the *r*-words, *bird* for example, one can hear a phonetic difference in the degrees of *r*- coloring. In Tangier speech, *bird* is pronounced as most Americans pronounce it, but is stonger and prolonged, something like *birrd*. The records show that the Bogue-Core Sound region has a strong *r*-coloring contrasting noticeably with Tangier but less so with Ocracoke. Of all of these, the pronunciation of *bird* by the Islanders would be the most conspicuous. Taken together, all would, however, sharply contrast, of course, with the *r*-less mainland dialects. *Car*, as another example, is pronounced with a strong *r* in all the outermost communities except on Tangier where one practically hears two syllables *carr-er* with both prolonged. In the speech of some of the older mainland speakers, one may hear *car* with a lighter *r*, sounding something like *care*, but seldom, if ever, like the typical New England *ka*.

For the following discussion on other important vowel variations, reference to the Pronunciation Chart on page 174 would be helpful. The vowel of *eggs*, which occurs with the vowel of *bet* generally on the mainland and elsewhere in most of the country, contrasts noticeably in the speech of the islands and Outer Banks communities. Tangier Islanders and the Outer Bankers, from the northernmost to the southernmost areas, tend to use the vowel of *day*. Though Ocracoke speakers alternate vowels in *eggs*, from that of *bet* to that of *day*, sounding respectively like either *eh-gs* or *ay-e-gs*, Tangier Islanders and the speakers of the Bogue-Core Sound area (Harkers Island and Salter Path) have the same vowel, that of *day*, but prolonged as is *ay-ee-gs*. One may detect a difference in Tangier speech and that of Harkers Island and Salter Path because of the former's tendency, as noted earlier, to lengthen and intensify all long vowels. The Delmarva (essentially Chincoteague) area seems more in line with Ocracoke than with the others. All in all, in words like *beg*, *keg*, *eggs*, and *Peggy*, as a general rule, all the areas tend to have them rhyme with *bay*. As far as I can tell, the *eh* of *beg*

never occurs before "g's" in Tangier speech, as it does in standard varieties.

In words like *judge*, *brush*, *touch*, and *shut*, usually with the vowel of *cut*, all the dialects frequently have some tendency toward fronting, the most common of which is movement from the vowel of *cut* toward the vowel of *bet*, resulting in *jedge*, *bresh*, *tech*, and *shet*. On Tangier, the pronunciation is slightly different in that it has more of a pronounced glide, passing from one vowel to another sounding like *jed-uh-ge*, for example. Ocracoke's fronting seems to have a noticeable "r" presence as in *jerdge*, whereas in the Bogue-Core Sound area *judge* and the other words are not as fronted and have possibly a much lighter "r-" coloring sound than found in Ocracoke, perhaps like the Southern *thirty* (*thuhty*).

In general, in the South, the vowel of *bat* and *bad* is prolonged and glides either upward or inward. *Bat* sounds something like *b-ae-uh-t* and *bad* like *b-ae-ih-d*. In the speech of the Islanders and Outer Bankers the *ae* vowel becomes quite interesting before words such as *bag*, *tank* and *ashes*. Among the easternmost North Carolina communities, the *ae* sound is upgliding as in *b-ae-ih-g*, *t-ae-ih-nk* and *ae-ih-shes*, though other slight variations may exist. For Tangier speakers the *ae* sound becomes *ay-e*, the vowel of *bay* prolonged and intensified : *b-ay-ee-g*, *t-ay-ee-nk*, and *ay-ee-shes*.

When it comes to words such as *fire*, *wire*, *tire*, *tired*, *iron*, *pliers*, *wash*, *while*, *file*, *mile*, and *pilot*, there seems to be something going on that resembles a kind of merger of the vowel of *wide* (ahi) and *far* (ah), a development that is widespread in the South and lower north regions, essentially among the uneducated, but not confined to them. Except for *wash*, people in the outermost coastal regions generally pronounce these words as *far*, *war*, *tar*, *tarred*, *aron*, *plars*, *whal*, *fal*, *mal*, and *palot*. *Wash* is different. Tangier speakers usually say *w-ah-ee-sh*, or *why-ee-sh*, prolonged and intensified. The Outer Bankers and Delmarva region appear to be mixed, varying between *w-ah-ee-sh*, *w-ah-sh* and *w-uh-ee-sh*.

The most conspicuous sounds of the Tangier Islanders and Outer Bankers occur in the pronunciation of certain long vowels. The first is the vowel of *beach*, *three*, *east*, and *sea*, the *ee* of *beet*. These words in Tangier speech are prolonged and intensified—in other words, louder and longer. However, the distinctive aspect is that the vowel is preceded by a sound something like *uh* in *hut* or in the unstressed syllable of *about*. They are, as a rule, pronounced *b-uh-ee-ch*, *thr-uh-ee*, *uh-ee-st*, and *s-uh-ee*. These pronunciations are matched essentially by those of the Bogue-Core Sound areas, but the latter are not as prolonged and intensified. The Ocracokers

have a preceding sound, but it seems not to be as clear as the others, sounding something like *b-ay-ee-ch*, *thr-ay-ee*, *ay-ee-st*, *s-ay-ee*—that is, with the preceding sound rhyming with *bay*. Moreover, people in both Ocracoke and the Bogue-Core Sound regions pronounce the word *creek* with the vowel of *beet*, preceded, of course, by their respective vowels, resulting in *cr-uh-eek* and *cr-ay-eek*. Tangier, however, pronounces the word *crik*, with the vowel of *bit*, like sections of Pennsylvania and some states westward.

In similar fashion, the Islanders and Bankers pronounce the vowel of *eight*, *day*, *play*, and *break* with varying preceding sounds, the most characteristic of which would be, for example, *uh-ay-ee-t* for *eight*. Ocracoke speakers seem to have an acoustic effect that is slightly different from Tangier Islanders and the Bogue-Core Sound residents in that they do not have as clear an *uh* sound before *ay*, the sound of which I find hard to represent in alphabetic spellings.

It appears that the Delmarva, Tangier, Ocracoke, the Bogue-Core Sound regions all pronounce *boat*, *toad*, and *road* pretty much the same, with shades of difference, also difficult to represent by alphabetic spellings. A reasonable try is *bo-ut* with the different regions showing varying degrees of rounding, gliding and lengthening. From the Delmarva region—the northernmost part, that is—one gets the impression that the speakers have a fronted or "umlauted" version associated more with the Philadelphia-Baltimore-Delaware area, but not with the gliding character of Tangier speakers. The Bankers are more similar, it seems, to those of Delmarva than to the Tangier Islanders in that their pronunciation tends to be more rounded, which in itself poses some interesting questions of origin and influence.

Of all the features of coastal speech discussed so far, the most striking and often written about is the vowel sound found in such words as *tide*, *time*, *night*, *eyes*, and *island*, the one that journalists, when they write about these "lapsed worlds" and "skewed talk," are fond of representing in the phrase *hoy toyde*. Typically, these words are pronounced with the *ah-ee* sound, rhyming with *buy*, in most of the United States, including the eastern states. It varies regionally, however, all along the Atlantic seaboard. The journalists' *hoy toyders* is close but does not quite match. Perhaps some very early seventeenth-century British spellings (loyt and hoye) encourage these current approximations. They were not right then and they are not right now. A similar sound has been noted in present-day London Cockney, a label that some journalists frequently and conveniently use in characterizing Outer Banks speech as well as that of Tangier. The words listed above are better represented as

t-uh-ee-d, *t-uh-ee-m*, *n-uh-ee-t*, *uh-ee-s*, and *uh-ee-land* for Outer Banks speech.

The Tangier variety is also special but in a different way. It is perhaps closer to modern Cockney than either the Ocracoke or Bogue-Core Sound dialects, but somewhat different because of its tendency, already noted numerous times, to prolong and intensify both elements of the vowel. The Tangier versions are *t-ah-ee-d*, *t-ah-ee-m*, *n-ah-ee-t*, *ah-ee-s*, and *ah-ee-land*. The Delmarva variety, with the transcriptions of *Ida*, *idea*, *island*, *pines*, *high*, and *white*, seems to lie somewhere between that of Tangier and the Outer Banks. The first element of these words seems to have the quality of the unaccented syllable of *uh* (sofa) and the second, the vowel of *bid*, sounding something like *t-uh-ih-d* for *tide*. However rendered, all these variations taken together are closer to each other than any of them are to those of any of their respective mainland neighbors. In passing, it is worth noting here that the natives of Messick and Guinea Neck, small villages of watermen, not far from Hampton, Virginia, pronounce these words more like the Outer Bankers of North Carolina than like the villagers of Tangier and Delmarva. Of interest also is the similarity of the pronunciation of such words as *right*, *ride*, and *my* by the oldest group of natives of Martha's Vineyard with a central beginning, resulting in *r-uh-ee-t*, *r-uh-ee-d*, and *m-uh-ee*. In all these places, one may hear also "rate" for "right."

Another prominent feature is the pronunciation of the vowel or "two vowels" of *out*, *house*, *now*, *crowd*, and *down*. To set a sort of standard of reference here, let me focus for a moment on which of the variations of this vowel most characteristically defines Virginians. The first is the vowel that stands before voiceless sounds (*-t*, *-th*, *-s*) as in *out*, *south*, and *house*. In these words, the first element has the sound of the weakly stressed syllable in *about* and *sofa* and the second, the vowel of *who*, resulting in *uh-oo*, giving us *uh-oo-t*, *s-uh-oo-th*, and *h-uh-oo-s*. The second is the vowel that stands before voiced sounds (*-d*, *n*) as in *crowd* and *down*, which has as its first element the vowel of *cat* and the second, the vowel of *flour*, and taken together, results as *ae-ou*, giving us *cr-ae-ou-d* and *d-ae-ou-n*.

Though seven different pronunciations of this vowel have been discovered in Virginia, I need to mention only one other, which has been described as the most uncharacteristic of Virginia speech and "quite foreign to it."[4] Its first element has the vowel of *car*, and the second, that of *flour*, which taken together occur as *ah-ou*. *Out* and *down* then would be pronounced as *ah-ou-t* and *d-ah-ou-n*, respectively. If so, it is this "quite foreign" variety, found only in Loudoun County and the adjoining parts of Maryland, that essentially marks

Tangier speech, except for the usual tenseness that accompanies Tangier pronunciation. For *out*, *south*, *house*, *crowd*, and *down*, then Tangier has *ah-ou-t*, *s-ah-ou-th*, *h-ah-ou-s*, *cr-ah-ou-d*, and *d-ah-ou-n*, all prolonged and intensified. The *cr-ae-ou-d* and *d-ae-ou-n* pronunciations are seldom, if ever, heard on Tangier. It is interesting to note that Delmarva and the Bogue-Core Sound area both have *d-ae-ou-n* for *down*, but only the latter has *ae-ou-t* for *out*. Both, however, have the same pronunciation, *h-ah-ou-s*, for *house*. Ocracoke appears to have for *out*, *house*, and *down* the first element of the vowel positioning somewhere between *ah* and *ae* and a fronted *oo* for the second, clearly not the *ae* as the Bogue-Core Sound region and Delmarva. The incidence of the *out* words and *down* words in the speech of the Islanders and Outer Bankers is not exactly cut from the same cloth, but taken together they all can be said to be somewhat different from that of mainland speech, a point made earlier about other features.

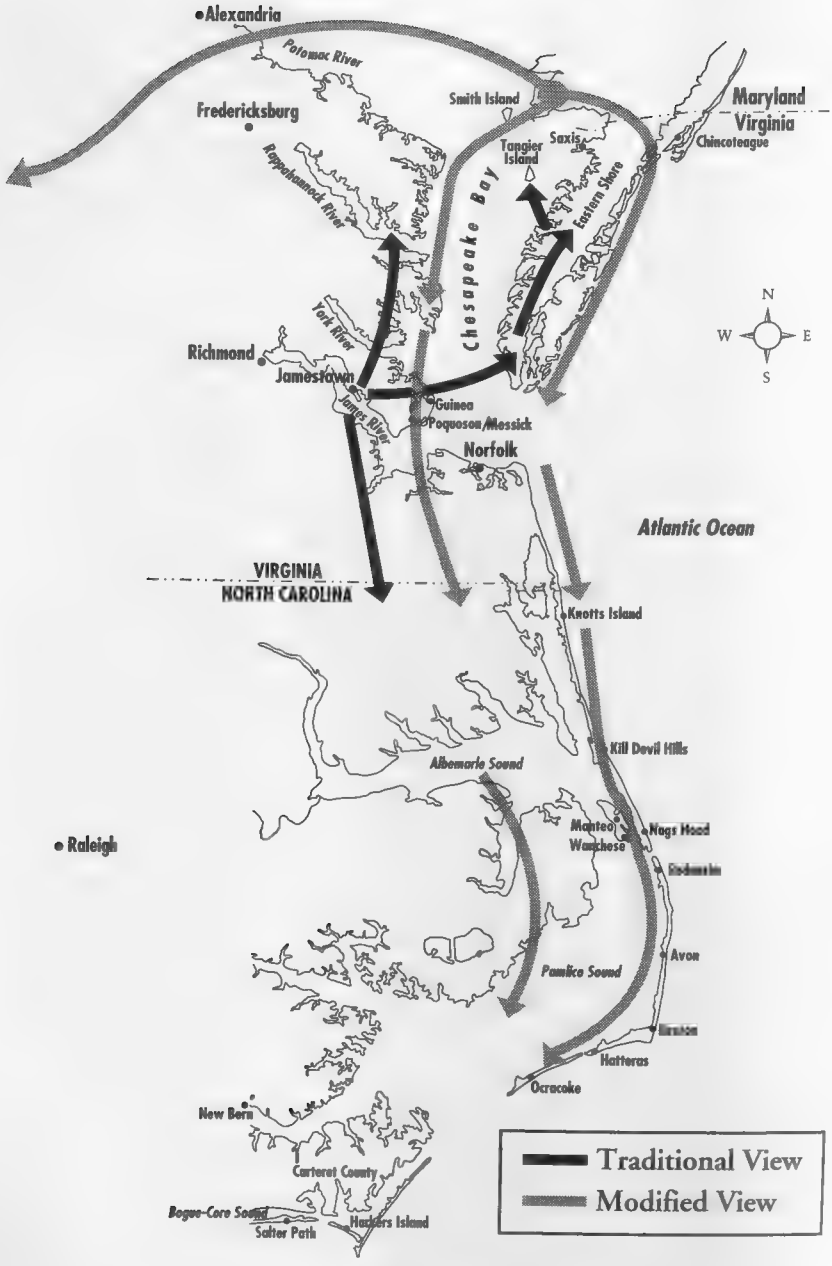
Finally, there is the vowel of *oil*, *joint*, and *oyster*, all of which have the vowel of *boy* throughout most of the country. Significant variations do appear, however, among some groups. For Tangier, *oil* has the vowel of *boy*, but is prolonged and tensed, sounding something like *oy-ee-l*. One does not hear the frequent *all* or *aisle* for *oil* or *bile* for *boil* here. *Joint* and *point* rhyme with *jint* and *pint*. *Oyster* is pronounced as *oy-ee-ster*, but frequently one will hear *oy-ee-shter*. For the Bogue-Core Sound region, *oil*, *joint*, and *oyster* all seem to have the sound of *boy*, but *oil* and other words like it, *spoil* and *boil*, tend to have a variant, somewhere between the sounds in *buy* and *boy*. These three words in Ocracoke speech seem to be standard, but they tend to have a sound, like that of the Bogue-Core Sound region, between *buy* and *boy*. It is perhaps worth noting here that *boil*, *point*, and *poison* were pronounced as *bile*, *pint*, and *pison* in some of Charles Dickens's novels, that they occurred in Cockney speech, and also that these same pronunciations survive in the folk speech of a number of regions in England today. These facts strongly suggest, as many have previously observed, that the diversity of folk speech in England has been since early times reflected in American English.

So, then, what can be said about the positions and relationships of these dialects along the Atlantic slope? Doubtless the features discussed here are sufficient and similar enough to distinguish a whole type of speech as a separate coastal variety, even though the varieties considered are recognizable from each other. They are Southern, to be sure, but they are different from the traditional Southern type and seem to be a mixture. With respect to vocabulary, expres-

sions, grammar, and usage, they may strike one as the folk usage associated with mountain speech. Other features are not totally strange to the Middle Atlantic states, specifically, the lower North region, and of this region, particularly Pennsylvania. It would not be a stretch to join the islands of the Bay and the villages of the Delmarva peninsula and the Outer Banks of North Carolina with places like Kittery, Maine, and Martha's Vineyard, a few miles off the coast of Massachusetts. With respect to the pronunciation discussed here, it would not be far-fetched, as suggested earlier, to imagine representatives from all these coastal areas—plus some from other Bay villages such as Saxis, Messick, and Guinea Neck—standing on a dock in lively conversations without any bystander within earshot suspecting that they were not all of the same place, unless that bystander happened to be either Guy Lowman or Raven McDavid.[5]

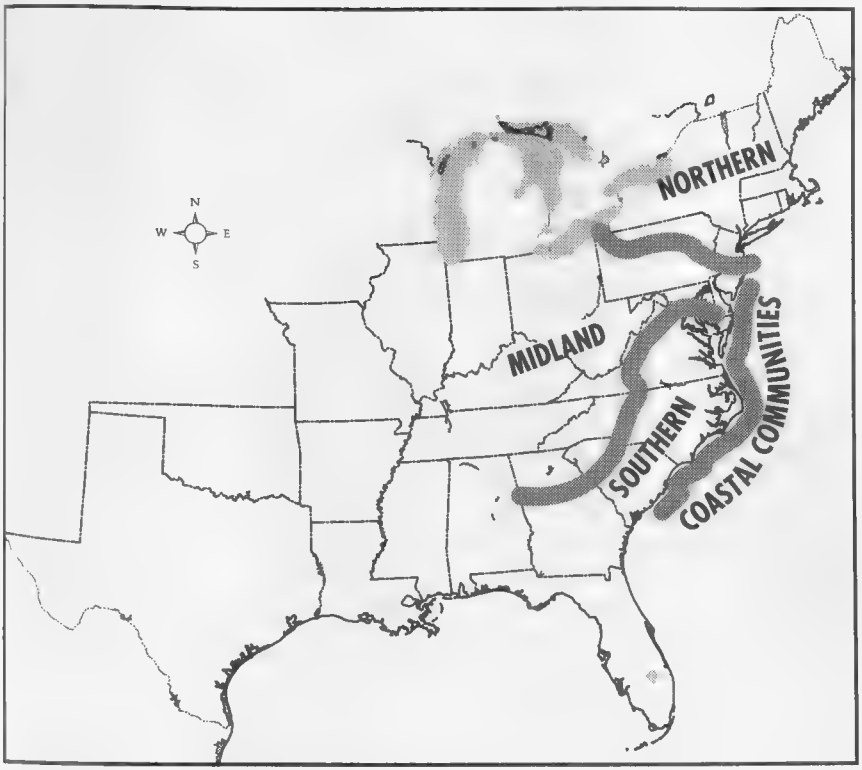
All these variants obviously are deeply embedded culturally and linguistically in the diversity of the original English settlement and before that among the many shires of seventeenth-century England. However, the line, I think, is not direct, for, not long after settlement, other migrations took place on this land during a good bit of its history. The way these coastal people talk must have been the result of intermediary stages of migration and resettlement, later than traditionally thought, where they gathered somewhere, touched, and took on essentially the character they now have sometime before the onset of still another movement that brought them to where they now live.

It is easy and attractive to assume that the place was Tidewater Virginia, and the time was early seventeenth century. This traditional assumption may be only a part of the truth. Given the nature of the linguistic similarities of these coastal people, is it not worth considering that their ancestors may have migrated as indicated earlier to other places and may have lived for a time in a certain area for a generation or two or more and later, because of desires and pressures of some sort, began to move, not in great numbers necessarily, in different directions, some to the hills and others to the shoals and sandbars of the coastal shores? My guess is that this particular migration of like-speaking people may have originated as a loosely bound group north of Tidewater, perhaps around the southern Maryland area. They took on, after some years, its special speech coloring between 1800 and 1850, give or take a decade or two. From that period, in small groups, maybe none larger than ten, they began to move and, once settled, to vary in their speech ways and, at the same time, to preserve many of the features they had earlier shared.



Outermost Atlantic Region

"Map of Outermost Atlantic Regions." Illustration: Deborah Miller



Atlantic Seaboard Dialect Areas

"Map of Atlantic Seaboard Dialect Areas." Illustration: Deborah Miller

This suggestion is not in accord with historical events as we have learned them, and neither is it armed with hard documentary evidence. On the face of it, I guess it can be fairly called a guess. Yet, we must keep in mind here that we are basically talking about the lesser sort, not the men of quality, who have received most historical interest. History has not always given full accounts of the lesser sort and the disenchanted. Many of the lesser sort in the South and along the Chesapeake started as bond servants, were not particularly fond of slavery, and considered the War as the slaveowners' war, not theirs. Consequently, they sought better conditions in more secluded areas, such as the hills and the outermost shores. If this view is not plausible, then the similarities of the speech of these regions is even more remarkable, considering how little contact the villages have had through the years.

It now remains to consider the future of the speech ways of these

small, traditionally isolated communities. The way of talk and the nature of the community are tightly bound together. If the latter goes, the former will certainly follow shortly thereafter. The merging of groups and communities has been the history of American life, and today the blending, machine-driven, is moving at an increasing rate. It is inevitable that such a dynamic leads to the eventual loss of identity of some. Do these communities have a future, and will their variety of speech be swallowed up? Some are willing to argue that any group with pride, fixed cohesive customs and values, strong community identification, and a distinctive language or dialect will keep its identity and see new eras, no matter the variety and intensity of outside pressures. Yet, the fact of the matter is that no community, unless it is a hundred proof self-sufficient, is impervious to encroachment and change in face of an industrial, technological, and mobile society such as ours.

One may mention any number of enclaves of ethnic groups or the Amish as exceptions to such an observation. Even they, however, have felt the press of progress. Make no mistake about it, these outermost Atlantic communities, as quaint and distinctive as some think they are, do not have the strong social and cultural binding of the Amish or other similar groups. Here, we have distinctive groups to a degree and a special way of talking, but they take their specialness from being communities best described as "small-town stuff." Their daily lives cannot be demonstrated to be in sharp contrast with those of the mainland and in great conflict with the movement of modern American society. One cannot drive or walk through any of these communities and immediately detect that they are as singular, for example, as the Amish. The people are not without modern transportation and conveniences, they do not dress in unique ways, they do not have customs and feasts largely different from others, and I cannot even imagine that any of them stop in their streets or on their porches to analyze their position in the great scheme of things or even their loss of identity or dialect. Except for the smallness of the communities and their speech, they are like Americans everywhere. What worries them most is intrusion in their lives, especially during the tourist seasons, in the form of crowded beaches, the bad behavior of some visitors, and the threat of losing a freedom of movement and a traditional way of making a living. Even though the residents are fully aware that all these intrusions mean money for their community, there are few who are not happy when the tourist season comes to an end.

Let me return to questions of future and talk. Those who write about these communities and their speech are, almost without ex-

ception, of one voice: these dialects are worthy of study, and you had better do it at once before they disappear! One scholar wrote: ". . . the Banks are becoming year by year less isolated and more susceptible to outside linguistic influence."[6] Another expresses urgency: "North Carolina dialects and folk speech are rapidly dying out as the twenty-first century approaches and automation replaces folk ways."[7] Still another speaks in a less concerned voice: "With the increasing growth of highways, causeways, and ferry routes . . . it seems inevitable that some modifications of the dialect will ensue."[8]

Journalists are steadfast in their stories, often supported by scholarly opinion, about the demise of the unique speech ways of these communities. Recently scholars have begun to couch their accounts and concerns in terms of "encroachment," "endangered species," and "moribund status." In fact, the Ocracoke dialect has been declared an "endangered dialect."[9] The very fact that we have spoken for years of dead languages means that earlier communities have collapsed and that languages and dialects once were and now are no longer. There are even some languages and dialects of which there are no traces. Smaller communities, one must admit, are in greater danger than larger ones. It is well known, for example, that Amazonian explorations have been instrumental in the death of many of the languages, hitherto unknown, that small tribes spoke. More to the point, gradual encroachment can lead to the same result: larger groups tend to swallow smaller groups. In nautical phraseology, big fish eat small fish.

Dropping metaphor very quickly and returning to the communities of our study, one must acknowledge that the coastal villages are facing an uncertain future. Are they at the point of death? I would be less than candid if I did not admit that all of them are under a kind of pressure that could alter their lives and speech in significant ways, but I do not think that any of them is at the point of death or in danger of being rapidly taken over by mainland communities and the more dominant speech ways—and will not be for a long time. Language and dialects, however, do change, and constantly so, even at the very time they are being studied. Those of isolated groups, circumscribed and detached in outlook and experience, once touched can die, and rather quickly at that. Yet, there are some reasons for believing that the language of the Outer Bankers and Islanders will be with us for a while.

Outer Banks speech is under more pressure than that, for instance, of Tangier Island. For all practical purposes, the Outer Banks are no longer isolated. Access is not the problem it once was, for the bridge and ferry systems are extremely efficient. They are

so efficient that rental cottages have led to summer homes, which have become either year-round or retirement homes. Outside businesses are legion and now provide employment for a local population that years ago made its living on the water. All this activity is bound to have an impact on the social and educational lives of the local people. For example, the Cape Hatteras Anglers Club just a few years ago was made up of almost exclusively Hatteras natives, whereas now it is dominated by "come heres." The schools now have more outside teachers and students, which, of course, is an ingredient for "contamination," and a good reason for considering the "brogue" an endangered species.

Even so, I do not believe that the Outer Banks dialect is at death's door. First of all, the dialect is spoken, with few differences along the entire chain of the Outer Banks from Kill Devil Hills, Kitty Hawk, Nags Head, Manteo, Rodanthe, Salvo, Avon, Buxton, Frisco, Hatteras, Ocracoke, even to Harkers Island and Salter Path of the Bogue-Core Sound area. For twenty-five years or more, I have found from shopping and eating out and socializing with natives, not to mention more direct contacts, many of whom are dear friends, that it is rare to hear from them, of all ages, anything but the Outer Banks dialect.

How long it will last is uncertain, however. Anyway, outside intrusion alone, no matter the degree, does not by the fact itself efface existing speech. I am encouraged by the enduring vitality of Cockney, situated basically in east central London, one of the largest and most important cities in the world. It might be deceptive, however, to push this comparison too far because the Outer Banks does not have the cohesiveness and sense of tradition of the speakers of Cockney. Still, it will be a long time before a complete merging of the "come heres" and the Bankers.

I have more hope for the speech of the Tangier Islanders—that is, if they are not swept away or inundated. Before I say why, let me try to dispel a notion that is widely expressed about "communities and dialects under siege." That is the assumption that the speakers of these old-fashioned dialects have a deep-rooted affection for and pride in the way they talk and consider it a badge or symbol of their identity, inmost thoughts, and sentiments, as if to say that their thought grooves and social and cultural bonds will be destroyed if they do not preserve and maintain it. It seems to me vain and downright wrong to pretend that this assumption is true for the villages discussed here, especially on the basis of a testimony of one or two people. If it is so, is it apparent or has it been demonstrated and proved? I think not for the Tangier Islanders.

Speech is a means of communication. The Islanders are aware

that the way they talk tells a lot about who they are, where they are from, and what they do. I seriously doubt whether they have any deeper or higher thoughts about the matter and are ready to take up arms. In fact, the way they talk has been a source of pain and embarrassment for them. After many years of mindless ridicule and being made fun of, many are somewhat hesitant, when elsewhere, to speak and say where they are from and seem to be convinced that the way they talk is bad and something to be ashamed of.

Tangier Islanders, then, cannot look to pride of language as a means of helping to preserve their speech. Yet, they do have an attitude about behavior and their talk that tends to impede encroachment and helps some to preserve their speech. That is, they abhor showing off and putting on airs, both social and linguistic. As a rule, they are supremely indifferent to the "strangers," not ugly, just indifferent. However, if they catch other Islanders "talking proper" to them, or "trying to," they will playfully mock them, an act that serves as a snaffle or restraint. It is as if they are politely, but teasingly, reminding the speakers that they are Tangier Islanders—which is not out of tribal pride, but from a distaste for affectation.

Another force of change for communities like Tangier is the invasion of outsiders or strangers. This is not the threat some think it is. For Tangier, it happens only during the summer, and those who come stay for only two or three hours. There simply are not enough accommodations, only a bed-and-breakfast or two. Moreover, there are no outside businesses, no rental properties, no retirement homes, and only two or three summer homes, a relatively new development that, if allowed to mushroom, could become a serious threat to the Island. Like people everywhere, when they put up a house for sale, they want to get top dollar, which will generally come from interested mainland buyers, not their neighbors.

A major factor, furthermore, is the maintenance of a livelihood. Presently, most of the Islanders are able to make their living, a meager one though, from working on the water. If the problems of the Bay continue, one must assume that the Islanders will have to look elsewhere for work, which, of course, would mean on the mainland, and probably with the result of the beginning of the demise of Tangier speech. As long as they can make a living from the Bay, it is not likely that the community will be hurt and its speech affected appreciably. Of all the reasons for believing that the speech of the Islanders has years to go is that it is very strong in the speech of their children. What is significant here is that they have their own school, K-12, and the children are taught almost exclusively by teachers who were born and now live on Tangier. Not insignificant,

but hard for outsiders to believe, is that the Islanders genuinely love Tangier Island as a place they prefer to live, which can be taken to mean, if the winds and tides behave and the Bay is restored to its earlier splendor, Tangier will survive well into the next century with its dialect intact.

What if things do not work out for the residents of these coastal villages and the pressure on them persists? Is there anything that can be done to preserve their speech? A bold question deserves a bold answer. To put it at its boldest, just about nothing, if "preserve" here means to keep it alive. It is here that the "endangered species" similarity breaks down. One cannot assume that when two things are alike in some respects they must be alike in other respects. Such an analogy is not necessarily endowed with scientific relevance, and, more important, it does little to clarify the situation. Declaring the American peregrine falcon, the Aleutian Canada goose, or, more relevant here, the rockfish (striped bass) an endangered species and creating strategies and coercive regulations to reclaim it is one thing. Designating a dialect under siege an endangered dialect and planning a reclamation or defensive project to keep it alive is a different kettle of fish. If by "preservation" one means to collect an organized body of information and place it in an archives of some sort, the way one would have a repository for information on old lighthouses and sailing vessels extolling their historical significance and virtues, then there is little that can be said against such a project, for it has merit.

However, "preservation" may give one the impression that the intent is to keep the dialects alive in the mouths of the Islanders and Outer Bankers by convincing them that many of their features of speech, though nonstandard and "antiquated," have good historical precedence and credentials, some even from the mouths of the better sort. It may try to convince the Islanders that one dialect is just as good as another, and that they should be proud of the way they talk, without some kind of strictures. One may agree that such an approach is good linguistic science but is bad advice for humans in the workaday world where standard speakers of English usually speak the loudest. Thus so, one might be smart to pause a moment or, better, to hold their tongues for several. Meditation may not be needed at all if the proponents of these views could direct their wisdom at society at large to persuade people of their "truths" and urge people to be more tolerant of speech differences. Otherwise, one must conclude that these offerings are little more than nice gestures. If those who feel that these colorful and historically important dialects are at the point of death are right, it is sad. Yet, really, what can anyone do about it?

Notes

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3. Ibid., 67.
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5. Alf J. Mapp, Jr., *The Virginia Experiment* (Richmond, Va.: Dietz Press, 1957), 7–8.
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8. John Harrower, *The Journal of John Harrower: An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773–1776*, ed. Edward Miles Riley (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1963), 166–67.
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10. Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *The First Americans, 1607–69* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 25–26.
11. Horn, 58.
12. Ibid.
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14. Ibid., 65.
15. Harrower, xiii–xiv.
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27. Ibid.
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29. Ames, 2.
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31. Smith, 144.

2: Tangier Beginnings and Development

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6. Donald G. Shomette, *Pirates on the Chesapeake, 1607–1807* (Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1985), 70.
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8. *John Fontaine, The Journal of John Fontaine: An Irish Huguenot Son in Spain and Virginia, 1710–1719*, ed. Edward P. Alexander (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972), 122.
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13. John Neely Mears, *Tangier Island* (Onancock, Va.: J. N. Mears, 1937), 5.
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22. Walter Lord, *The Dawn's Early Light* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 43–44.
23. Wallace, 131.

24. Turman, 183.
25. Larry S. Chowning, *Barcat Skipper: Tales of a Tangier Waterman* (Centreville, Md.: Tidewater Publishers, 1983), 26.
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27. Samuel Warren Hall, *Tangier Island: A Study of an Isolated Group* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 19–20. Since I was able to get only a portion of the Swain typescript, but not any of the Kelso papers, I have had to rely on Hall, who had access to both during the 1930's.
28. Kirk Mariner, *Revival's Children: A Religious History of Virginia's Eastern Shore* (Salisbury, Md.: Peninsula Press, 1979), 111.
29. Hall, 21.
30. Ibid.
31. Mears, 31.
32. William W. Warner, *Beautiful Swimmers: Watermen, Crabs, and the Chesapeake Bay* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1976), 244–45.
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9. Harold G. Wheatley, "This Is My Island, Tangier," *National Geographic* 144 (1973): 700.
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5: Worship

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2. Adam Wallace, *Parson of the Isles* (Philadelphia: Office of the Methodist Home Journal, 1872), 50.

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3. Ibid.
4. Nora Miller Turman, *The Eastern Shore of Virginia, 1603–1964* (Onancock, Va.: Eastern Shore News, 1964), 195.
5. Denny Crockett, telephone conversation with the author, Tangier Island, Va., 12 January 1999.
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7: Overview

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8: Pronunciation

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4. Harold Orton, and Eugen Dieth. *Survey of English Dialects* (Leeds, Eng: J. Arnold, 1962–71).

5. Helge Kökeritz, *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 217.

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12. Guy S. Lowman, Tangier Island Field Records Va. 25 and 25* (1936), Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS), 1936–48.

13. Robert Howren, "The Speech of Ocracoke, North Carolina," *American Speech* 37 (1962): 284.

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15. Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes, *Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 62. It has been called to my attention that the merger of *pin/pen* is a newer, not an older relic, feature in American English. This can not be so, for Kökeritz, in his book on Shakespeare's pronunciation notes (pages 86, 212) the frequency of use of the merging of such pairs as *hint/hent.*

16. Howren, 285.

17. Hans Kurath and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., *The Pronunciation of English in the Atlantic States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 135.

18. Kökeritz, 258.

9: "Over Left Talk" or "Talking Backwards"

1. I should, perhaps, be more tentative about claiming "distinctiveness" here for the Tangier and Smith Island variety of "talking backwards," for I have been informed that it is widespread. If other such varieties match that of these close neighbors, I would be surprised. For now, I leave the issue, if there is one, lying fallow.

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10: Words, Names, and Expressions

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